

**Backroom Conversations**  
**16 May 2009**

**Museum Focus: Art + Design**

Speakers: Ron Arad (RA), Defne Ayas (DA), Lim Geun-jun (LG), Michael Lin (ML),  
Siu King-chung (SKC)

Moderator: Charles Merewether (CM)

Opening remarks: Claire Hsu (CH), So Kam Shing, JP (SKS)

CH: Thank you very much for coming today to Backroom Conversations Museum Focus panels brought to you by Asia Art Archive and ART HK 09. For those of you unfamiliar with the Asia Art Archive we are a not for profit organization based in Hong Kong. We are a resource documentation and ideas platform for contemporary art in the region. As well as offering one of the most comprehensive libraries and archives open to the public in this field, we also organize a lot of different programmes to really think about the material in the archive and to discuss issues prevalent within contemporary art discourse.

Some of you may have attended the symposium we organized last year around the same time with Chinese University, Shifting Sites: Cultural Desire and the Museum, which considered issues related to the museum and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the building of cultural districts, particularly relevant to Hong Kong as we are very much in the process of building the very ambitious West Kowloon Cultural District project.

This year we continue to consider issues around the museum but instead take as our point of departure areas prevalent in contemporary art practice, thinking and presentation. The first being Art & Design, and the second panel this afternoon will focus on Participation, Collaboration and the Every Day. We have adopted a new format this year and move away from longer presentations to encourage as much conversation as possible with everybody in the room. And so, first I would like to apologize to our speakers for giving them very restricted time limits to speak and also for restricting the number of images they can show, and also to our moderators who have to make sure that these times are kept, but we hope that this will really lead to some good discussion in the room, and if not we will just have to switch back to the other format next year and you'll all have to come back and do it again!

And so, before I introduce you to the first panel can I please ask Mr. So Kam-shing, acting Home Secretary for the Home Affairs Bureau of Hong Kong. The Home Affairs Bureau is very generously sponsoring this afternoon's panel for which we are very grateful – thank you. I would also like to thank the Burger Collection, AXA and also all the team at ART HK 09.

SKS: Thank you Claire, and distinguished guest speakers. Ladies and gentlemen, I am so pleased to be here to welcome you all, especially those from abroad. The Home Office Bureau are very pleased and proud to support this event and would like to congratulate Asia Art Archive for successfully launching this Backroom Conversations series and Museum Focus panel discussions. As Claire mentioned, we also supported the event last year and we hope that we can continue this collaboration in the future. Right now the Hong Kong Government's Leisure and Cultural Services Department is operating fifteen museums around the territory, but this will change a few years down the road with the big project that is going to be built in the West Kowloon District. In that development we will have a new cultural institution with museum functions, called M + for the time being, and it will be a forward looking, imaginative and very flexible institution, unlike those which are now operating in Hong Kong. It will offer a huge opportunity for planning and discussions and this institution will force across an interdisciplinary interpretation of culture and encourage cross-fertilization. As we move into the next phase of development of our museum in Hong Kong it is very important to have constant dialogue and reflection on the development of museum services. I think a forum like this, today, is very meaningful and we hope to continue to take advice from both local and overseas experts who can exchange views and discuss how we can continue to evolve the roles and functions of museums in Hong Kong, and how together we can meet new challenges.

The two panel discussions today are indeed very timely and pertinent, and the topics 'Design and Art' and 'Collaboration and Participation' are very relevant. In fact, in Hong Kong, the Heritage Museum is the first to incorporate design in its collection and exhibition programming. The future M + which I mentioned also has design as one of the four initial broad groupings to be developed in its collection and programming, so I am sure there will be a lot more room for creativity and excellence in the development of design as well as a cross over with other art forms.

Many will agree that the promotion of art and culture is as important within the museum walls as much as outside the museum. The idea of making art a part of people's daily encounter will certainly divide art practices in the future and nothing is more important than connecting art to the community. Talking about community involvement I would like to mention, if you do not already know, that over these two days all the museums around Hong Kong are offering free admission to celebrate International Museum Day. This year this event will attract some 60-80,000 visitors, both locally and from overseas. This shows the keen interest of the general public in museums and cultural activities in Hong Kong and I am sure that with sustained effort between the government, the art sector and the community at large we can co-create more new and meaningful art experiences for everyone to enjoy. Thank you very much.

CH: Thank you Mr So. Let me now hand you over to our panellists. Thank you all so much for coming, most of you a very long way. I would like to introduce Ron Arad, Defne Ayas, Lim Guen-juen, Siu King-chung and Michael Lin, and I will now hand you over to Charles Merewether, our moderator for this panel. Charles is an art historian,

writer, and curator. He was the collections curator at the Getty Center in Los Angeles for some ten years, the curator of the Sydney Biennial 2006, and also the Deputy Director of the Cultural District of Sadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi between 2007-2008. Thank you (and kindly switch off your phones, please).

CM: Good afternoon, thank you all for coming. It is a real pleasure to have this opportunity to host this second Backroom Conversation – a very large backroom – but it is great to have you all here and interested to listen today to each of our speakers. I want to thank, of course, and echo others thanks to the Asia Art Archive for hosting this event which is, I think, extremely important in terms of Hong Kong and also cities today around the world, giving the opportunity for yourselves and for the speakers to exchange ideas and reflect on the history, if you will, but also in terms of the future of some of the key issues. I have no doubt that in fact art & design, perhaps in some cities may not be the key issue, it may be something else, but I think certainly here, in terms of Hong Kong, the issue of the inter-relationship between the visual arts is of great importance. I certainly think that the real movement forward now in terms of the development of the site in West Kowloon, of M +, is a wonderful movement forward for this city, in every way possible.

Of course, I must say that M + won't be able to answer all your needs but I think it will play a highly symbolic and very important role here. And I think that Asia Art Archive has seized a very timely opportunity by which to, in a sense, reflect on, with a broader frame of reference, some of the sorts of issues that M + is going to have to address. One of them in particular is what kind of museum best fits Hong Kong? Who makes those decisions? How do you begin to shape a museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – an international museum, but one that is very much located within Hong Kong and within the community of Hong Kong? What are the needs, in terms of the community, in terms of awareness and education and appreciation of the visual arts, but at the same time, to really think about the visual arts today? This is not meant to be simply, let's say, an historical museum, it's meant to be a museum which is alive today and very much in touch with what's going on within the artistic world.

One of those subjects is the old, thorny issue about the relationship between art and design, or art, craft and design. We know that within the modern period this was explored, for example, by the great moment within the Soviet modern movement, after the revolution of 1917 and for the about the next ten years there was an extraordinary wealth of production, of collaboration between artists across different fields, and in particular across art, craft and design. The same could be said, in fact, of Germany, with the Werkbund and then, of course, with the Bauhaus and I am sure many of you have been students of those movements. But we can also look more closely in time, and let me instance, for example, Japan, and I think that Japan in the post-war period and after the atomic bomb in particular, had to rethink an awful lot about how to develop institutions, how to develop a new practice, in fact to help build and sustain a new Japan throughout the period of the '50s and '60s. And you have, I think, an extraordinary artistic moment between about 1951 and 1970 in which Japan saw this burgeoning of artists working

across art, design and craft, photography, film making, ceramics, etc. collaborating on all sorts of projects which were experimental in which they found places including, of course, department stores where they were able to show their practice.

So I think it is a good opportunity, or an opportune moment, perhaps, to be able to raise it again, because we are no longer back in the 1920s, or indeed the 1950s and '60s. We are now in a new moment, I think, in which we can re-think these things in terms of the future, maybe draw upon the past in terms of the lessons but certainly think about what needs to be done to be able to ensure the greatest creativity for our young and old artists, and I think that has tremendous bearing on the situation in Hong Kong and hopefully will inform, if we want to bring it back to here, now, today, hopefully it will inform the kind of development of ideas in a very concrete way for institutions such as M +.

So, thank you all for coming, and I will now introduce speaker by speaker for them to give their brief ten minute address which allows us time then to be able to have a more general discussion with us all. Our first speaker is Ron Arad. He co-founded the design and production studio, One Off, in London in 1981, followed in 1989 by his firm, Ron Arad Associates architecture and design practice. He is currently professor of product design at the Royal College of Art in London; Ron Arad also designs for companies including Kartell, Vitra, Moroso, etc. He is, I must say, if I may, a very important figure for us all in terms of his practice and in terms of challenging these sorts of divisions which have become, in a sense, institutionalized by many of our museums. They need to be challenged, and who better to challenge them than the artists themselves in terms of their practice, and for institutions, in fact, to respond to artists practice rather than to confine artistic practice, and I think that all our speakers who come across the various fields of the visual arts, including design, will be able to address this today. So, Ron, please...

RA: I just thought of Margaret Thatcher for a second, because she said once, very proudly, 'we are a very tolerant nation' which means there are things to be tolerated and I think discussions like this, about art and design, somehow remind me of that, as if there is a discussion to have as to whether design, or indeed anything that has function to it, can be included in a museum or institution that deals with visual art. I also remembered 'Documenta 8', where I exhibited. It was the first 'Documenta' where they decided that maybe we should include design in the event, and it ended in tears, actually in a physical fight. There was a Corsican artist, I think his name is Leccia, and he showed his piece of conceptual art, which was the latest Mercedes car on a turntable. A Mercedes car is, of course, a design but it was exhibited as a piece of conceptual art and he was to share the room with Alessandro Mendini, an Italian designer and founder of Alchemy. Alessandro Mendini showed a hard-edged, yellow, white and black paintings, and the artist said "I am not having a designer in my room", and they had to call the police and the bouncers, and there was a real physical fight! I am very happy to have some photographs of the event. We could have had this discussion about photography and art twenty years ago. I don't think anyone has a problem with looking at the work of, for example, Cindy Sherman or Andreas Gursky or, I don't know, I could make a long list, I don't think

anyone would say that it can't be art just because they use a camera. At the same time no one is confusing Bill Viola with Steven Spielberg. We know what is what, although a scientist can argue about the definition of a desert. What is a desert? Some would say it is something to do with sand, other would say it has something to do with the weather or with lack of water. There are different views on the definition of a desert but you know if you're in the middle of a desert, and you know if you're not in a desert and you don't have to be neurotic about it.

Actually I haven't prepared anything. Oscar Wilde tried to define art as something that is not allowed to have a function. Maybe this definition served a purpose for a while but like every definition and every doctrine, it has its sell-by date. I prefer to relate to something else that Oscar Wilde said: he said that there is only two types of people, there's charming people and there are tedious people and I think it is about time the art world got wise and learnt to distinguish between things that are interesting and charming and things that are tedious and boring and I hope that this is the last discussion on art and design, so maybe that will make it an important one. I now have experience of museums and have just closed a retrospective show at the Pompidou Centre. The Pompidou has a sort of a more liberal view and has no problem with exhibiting people like me next to Paul Klee in the same room, and every time there is a re-hang you see that they are not bothered about labels and compartments. I had a different problem with the French because my show was called 'No Discipline' and they objected to the title, not because of the meaning, they loved the meaning; they had no problem with the word 'discipline', they had a problem with the word 'no' because it is in English rather than in French and in 1994 they made the rule of only having French names in French institutions and they offered me 'Sans Discipline' or 'Indiscipline' and because I am not a disciplined person I said, "No, it is 'No Discipline'" and I won. At that time I decided that when the show goes to New York it will have to have a French name. So, do you want to see the Pompidou Centre show? I have to resort to my telephone, as I don't know what images I have prepared, so let's go to the telephone here. We will do this very fast, speed of light...

I remember protesting about having to do a retrospective. I mean of course you are more interested to show new work and you feel exposed when you show work that you made twenty-six years ago. My first piece of design, before I knew I was a designer, was a reclaimed car seat, it's called *Rover Chair* because it comes from a Rover car seat, and once, when I walked out of the architect's office that I tried to work for, it was very difficult to work for other people, and it is very difficult to work for other people after lunch, so one lunch time I didn't come back and I made my first piece of design, this *Rover Chair* – I brought it home, I took my tools and greasy hands, and twenty six years later I was not allowed to touch in unless I was wearing white gloves, and it's mine! It belongs to me, it was in my living room. The show at the Pompidou was vaguely divided into Studio pieces, Industrial design and architecture, and if we had more time we could discuss this. It was very nice to see pieces there that met for the first time twenty-six years later. I used to make a piece, and put it away and then I would make another 'sibling' for the piece and they never met each other until the show at the Pompidou Centre. It is really nice to see, if you go to Flickr, so many people have taken pictures of

the 'No Discipline' show, so many French people, they feel rebellious. So we've talked a bit about the Pompidou Centre.

The MoMA has a different attitude –they have very strict rules about what they can include in their design collection, and they have meetings about it and before they acquire something there is a whole panel discussing it. It can only be things that are put into production and that were, at some point, commercially available. The Art department, of course, will not have anything that is ever suspected of having anything to do with function. I find myself doing a lot of work that doesn't have a home, not here and not there, it is like being a refugee, like having no passport. We have some people here from the Tate – the Tate doesn't have the problem because design is ignored completely so they don't have to deal with the issue.

I will show you what I have prepared for MoMA. They are very, very, very territorial. For example, when they asked me who I wanted to be part of my symposium, and I thought of Tom Freidman and Tom Sacks, and I said to them, as a joke, maybe we could have another Tom, maybe Tom Wesselmann, and they had never heard of Tom Wesselmann in the design department. It was really shocking and I thought they were joking, but they weren't. To be fair to them, art is dealt with in the office next door to them, so why should they know. So the Paris show was based on a very expensive disposable piece. At MoMA, my way to deal with the show, to make it more interesting for me, was to do a huge sculpture, a huge structure, which would have a life after the show. Of course I had to sell it to someone so they could lend it to MoMA because, I don't know if you've noticed, but it is OK to say "We don't have any money, we don't have a budget for this". It is almost like saying "we are recycling our papers". So the show at the MoMA is based around a big structure that is called *Cage Sans Frontier* and for me to get interested in the show, it is the building of this that is becoming the main activity.

This is a different piece – it is thirty metres long and five metres tall, and twelve metres wide, and yes, it will have some functional pieces on the shelves. And before, when I had to sell it to someone I toyed with doing it as an outdoor piece, but it is going to Singapore Free Port from MoMA and everybody is happy.

Rather than finish, I think I will just fade out and someone else can start speaking... I wanted to show you something. I have a piece that I will show at MoMA for the first time and it is like... you have an idea, as one does, what if I do two pieces, one is the negative of the other, two pieces that are totally identical except that one is negative and one is positive. What if I zoom into a virtual material until I see the particles, so in the positive one the particles will be balls and in the negative one they will be holes and that idea coincided with an exhibition of sculpture organized by Sotheby's. There was a very strict deadline for photography, and I said "look, there is no way I can keep to the deadline for the photography, but I can make a photograph" (because that's what we do now, we make fake photographs) and I am very happy to say that this is the first time that Sotheby's have used a fake photograph, they have a photograph in their catalogue of something that doesn't exist. Although I was very optimistic about meeting the deadline

for the opening of the show, this piece never made it to the show but it was OK because it was in the catalogue and I sold something. It took a year to make this piece. I think I'll skip...

CM: I think we should stop...

RA: I'll stop...

CM: Just so the other speakers can participate...

RA: I haven't begun yet, but...

CM: Thank you very much Ron. Our second panellist is Defne Ayas. She is the Consulting Director at Arthub in Shanghai, a non-profit foundation, serving China and the rest of Asia. She is also a curator at Performa, which is based in New York. As well, and I don't know when she is able to do it, she is an art history instructor at the New York University in Shanghai. Please welcome Defne.

DA: I think I'm going to start with an image of Iznik ware. It is a plate and it is really telling of the cultural amnesia that is existing between China and the rest of Asia, so China's relationship to the rest of Asia including Iran and Turkey, can really be told through the image of the plate. As you know porcelain moved from the kilns of Jingdezhen all the way through the tribal movement through Central Asia ending in Iran and Turkey, it was free-styled from there and then went back to China so there was an interesting transfer of knowledge that took place; from Iran the cobalt blue went back. The way really that the porcelain moved when it came back, how the Dutch took it on and spread it all around the world and made it to Britain and all the way to Philadelphia and North America. So the story of the Iznik ware is really interesting because it is telling of a cultural amnesia, it is telling of the existing global trading networks of the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, so when we are talking about the museum in relation to art and design region is very important, the geography is very important, this is something that the Asia Art Archive has been very much supporting.

The same thing can be said about how art and design moved, how images moved from one country to the other and came back again. We can also talk about the contours of market demand, of the consumer demand. What we can see through the movement of the Iznik ware we can may be even draw parallels to the way of market demand of Chinese contemporary art, the way tiles have moved, the ways plates have moved back then, there can be an analogy that can be made with the market demand. So my interest of course, as a Turk, coming to China by way of New York, was this nostalgic connection, I wanted to

really tap into this cultural history and see it really from China in relation to the rest of Asia. (Next image please...)

When I arrived in China what struck me most was the fascination with the future, this platinum plated future that we are working with. Everything is projected for 2010, '12, '15; at the time when I arrived it was the Olympics, now it's the Shanghai Expo, and I am sure there is another development planned for 2015 that I am not aware of yet. So when I worked with the Government Foundation in Shanghai they gave us these incredible urban screens in the busiest commercial centre of the city, the urban screens that are really this tall – this image has not been photo-shopped, this is the actual screen – where we commissioned artists from all around Asia, very young artists from Indonesia, relatively well known artists like Takashi Murata, who had access to the screens. So we used the screens to replace the commercial content with cultural or artistic content. However, you realize also that the Government has this interest to work with art and design, to re-hash the image of Shanghai to the rest of the world, so there is this urge to create a new modernity for Shanghai, as it was in the 1920s and '30s in Shanghai, that glorious colonial period where everything sort of mingled form both the Chinese, the Japanese and Russian immigrants who lived there in the '20s and '30s as well as, of course, the British, French and American influence. So there is both an urge for the future but also this nostalgic need to recreate Shanghai as it was in the '20s and '30s. So that was also fascinating. I work in performance and new media so, to me, this collaboration was a wonderful way to see how Shanghai is thinking about its future in terms of arts and culture.

(Next image please... )

Both the historic and nostalgic connection as well as this urge to look into the future, very nicely coincided with the centenary of the art historical movement, Futurism. As you know the Futurist manifesto was published in 1909, started by Italians, and it was on the first page of *Le Figaro*, I mean the artist had serious 'guanxi' (connections) to make it – imagine now publishing your manifesto on the front of *The New York Times*. What the Futurists really wanted to do was to get rid of the romantic notions of art and to embrace the future. It was very provocative, very interdisciplinary, very enamoured of the city, of speed, of noise and pollution. They wanted to see art that was getting rid of romantic notions and that embraced the industrial age, to work with metal and to work with noise and to create your own instruments. The artists were extremely open across the disciplines so they embraced food, they embraced typography, they embraced all kinds of experimentation. Of course it had its issues, which I will raise in a second, but the Futurist centenary became interesting, but why am I talking about this in the context of China? It is little known that after the manifesto was published in *Le Figaro* it moved from France in the same year to Japan and Russia, in 1909, so it was very interesting to see how the manifesto took over various different artistic scenes. It is also little known that the manifesto was also published in Shanghai in 1921, (may we have the next image please... ) It also came to China, and this is still something that you cannot find in Wikipedia, which I would be happy to upload, but the Futurist influence also took place in Shanghai. So in the 1920s, some of the artist living in Shanghai moved either to

France, for their education, from where they came back with very romantic notions of painting, perhaps the very beginning of modern oil painting for China which is important, of course. Those artists who actually went to Japan came back equipped with some of the cues that were informed by the Futurist Manifesto.

We seem to have lost a few images, what I was showing you before is what the Futurists had done with typography, and language, because they really wanted to also look at the way language was working, how can we create images from words, they just tried everything. Ten minutes is very difficult to condense it all, but Lu Xun himself, the Godfather of modern literature in China, was also a graphic designer himself, he was very much influenced by Bauhaus, as well as Japanese wood block prints. He created incredible modern logos including for Beijing University.

(Next image please...)

There were incredible graphic designers at the same time who came from the tradition of Chinese ink, who came from the tradition of calligraphy and carving, but then they really embraced experimentation with futurist design like Qian Juntao. (Next image please... ) This is an advert, showing the intersection between the commercial world, the art world and the design world. As Ron mentioned, this contrived, or maybe 20<sup>th</sup> century categorization didn't exist as much before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Now when I look at China, dance is dance, theatre is theatre, architecture is architecture, typography and graphic design is in the commercial graphic design world. Modern dance you can trace to 1992, contemporary art you can trace to '79, so the last three decades have really been talking within very strict lines. I think this was an ad that was done in the '30s, and it is very similar to what Fortunato Depero, the futurist artist and designer, has done with Campari ads, giving shape to typefaces etc, and bringing three dimensionality, and this was a cigarette advert that actually applied it. So the Japanese and Russian influence took place in Shanghai, but designers were also being influenced by *Vanity Fair* covers and other American magazines. So it is a fascinating period to look at and be inspired by as a template, and really take it on board for the next hundred years for art and design in China as well as the rest of Asia.

(Next image please...)

Of course there is politics, and it is hard not to talk about this when it comes to Futurism; the way typefaces were used, the way calligraphy, the brush strokes are used, can be analyzed in various ways – if you want to say “down with the bourgeoisie” during the cultural revolution, or “down with the gang of four”. There have been a lot of ways to express certain revolutionary ideas and definitely the posters for the '60s and '70's are relevant to this (may we have the next image please... ) So I wanted to show you how futurists were themselves close to power and how they were actually very close to the Fascist movement. That's one of the things, every time I want to speak about Futurism and how interdisciplinary they were, and cutting edge in their spirit, the fact that they were very good friends with Mussolini also is personally their Achilles' heal, of course. So I wanted to show you images of how Mussolini's head was used which can, of course,

have a parallel study with China. So, what I'm trying to say is that the Futurists art historical analyses of the '20s and '30s in Shanghai allows us to have an art historical connection as well as a nostalgic connection, sometimes you need that emotional cushion, and really look at the next generation of graphic designers, fashion designers, architects. I started a research group who have done a graphic design and typography session with fantastic people like Lynn Pan and Ou Ning; we've done a whole session on noise, looking at noise music from all around Asia; next week we're having a discussion on architecture and dance and the architects who will be involved are, themselves, influenced by Constructivism, which is sort of the generation after Futurism, and who are active in the Shanghai Expo', designing the Dutch pavilion. So the template really works well for looking into the future for art and design.

CM: Thank you Defne. Our next speaker is Lim Guen-juen. He is an art and design critic based in Seoul. He was formally assistant Curator at Artsonje Center and Editor in Chief of Sigon Art Publications. He just recently published *Crazy Art Made in Korea*, looking at the work of twenty-five Korean artists. He writes for *DT*, which is a design studies journal, and is currently also working on his PhD thesis, titled *Interface as Symbolic Form: recent transformation at the crossroads of art and design, 1992-2005*. Thank you....

LG: Well, I'm a nerd, so I'm not so good at making a beautiful delivery, so please let me read from my notes.

Today, I'd like to introduce DT networkers' Prop Art or Prop Design practice which is showing a new fusion of design and art. DT is an open network of designer, writer and artists based in Seoul, Korea. It was established in 1999. There are loyal participants, but we don't have a membership.

The term Prop-Art is derived from the African American slang "Mad Props". You can use the expression when someone does something that is appreciated or respected. It is a kind of alternative to thank you. So, Mad means extremely, and Props means awesome. But prop originally meant property which is stolen... or props for a stage...

So, when you steal somebody's art or the method in appreciation of it, we call it practicing Prop Art or simply propping. Of course it is broken English. Anyway, it is somewhat like featuring. You know, featuring is a term used in the music industry to credit a musician who is not the main artist for their performance on a song or, on an album. But nowadays it is not so easy to distinguish who is featuring whom. For example, in many cases it is often abbreviated to feat. When you say A feat. B, it can mean A is featuring B but it can also mean A is featured by B. So, when I note down references for Prop-Art, I write "Props from/to" something or somebody. It's kind of a footnote system for today's self-referential art.

And also Prop Art is somewhat comparable to the Relational Art defined by Nicolas Bourriaud. Well, DT networkers had no idea about what Relationalism was until recent years, but the practices had and have a lot in common. On the other hand, DT networkers have been influenced by Para-Functionalism (or Design Noir) by Anthony Dunne. Therefore, you can simply think DT networkers' Prop Art practice is a Korean version of Relational Aesthetics and Design Noir.

So, nowadays DT people are thinking again about the design profession – within the group designers are in the majority – they are thinking about where they are, and for that you need a map. This is a weather chart designed by the industrial designer Jackson Hong. He is a founding member of DT network. Actually, as designers we have a fear of the profession dying, because it has been transformed in such a radical way. After designing this map, Jackson gave up the traditional profession of industrial designer. I will tell a bit more about his story later.

But basically, DT folks' cognitive model much stands on the *OTAKU* culture, so they love to use SKIN and DATABASE combination. When they design a product like object or art-piece like object, actually it is just a skin that is linked to a specific cultural database by a weird protocol programmed by them.

Do you know what *Moe* anthropomorphism is? Wiki says *Moe Gijinka* is a form of anthropomorphism where *Moe* qualities are given to non-human beings, objects, concepts, or phenomena. In addition to *Moe* features, *Moe* anthropomorphisms are also characterized by their accessories, which serve to emphasize their original forms before anthropomorphosis. Simply when you see a *Moe* -girl-character, to feel *Moe* (a certain fetish), you should be able to read the varied references. Like, head is from this, arms are from that...

Well, to explain our generation's skin and database combo method, I made a diagram of cognitive model, which differs from the older generation's one. Between the signifier and the signified you have to develop a conjuncture to make a skin and a database combination.

This third slide shows *Rama Lama Ding Dong*, the duo piece by Jackson Hong and MeeNa Park, two of DT networkers. Jackson was a vehicle designer at Samsung Motors, but he lost his job during the Asian Economy crisis in the late '90s. He then moved to the States, studied at Cranbrook and worked at IDEO, but he got fired again and then became a nice psychopath who designs weird products that stand for the sake of product.

And MeeNa is a painter who is famous for machine like behaviour and inhuman rule-based projects. Her initial work, the *Dingbat* painting series, is composed of a Dingbat diagram, each part of which is painted with specific colours collected from the market by the artist. The skin is a false message painting, and the database, the colours; the archive is saying there is a certain group of colour-products available at this moment. She is always a hardcore archivist by nature.

In this case, by practicing Prop Art and Design co-workmanship, MeeNa enslaved Jackson and Jackson enslaved MeeNa, The title of the picture on the right is really weird, let me read it out: *ATUGGGGLUXWHJKRX*, and she made an instruction, a manual, and asked Jackson to make it. So this is a new product. Actually, MeeNa is a painter and she doesn't usually make plastic things like this. She collected one of those car colour charts showing what colours were available in the Korean market at the time, and she found that GM were making a weird green coloured car. In Korea green is not really a popular colour; they hate the colour green so they don't buy green cars. But GM has no idea about the market so they continue to develop weird colours.

Anyway, MeeNa didn't know how to paint car paint onto plastic and so Jackson realized the relief for her, but on the other side the triptych was made by MeeNa, so there is a weird type of co-workmanship going on. The installation on the floor of this image is called *Rama Lama Ding Dong*. Jackson is a car designer, but in this case he decided to design a Dingbat 'phone in 3D for MeeNa. MeeNa decided on the colour and they made a beautiful installation with Prop Art co-workmanship. Thank you.

CM: Thank you very much. Our next speaker is Michael Lin. He is an artist based in Taipei and Shanghai. He graduated from a design centre in Pasadena, California, and returned to Taipei in 1993. He has exhibited in museums and exhibitions worldwide. Please welcome Michael.

ML: When they told me I had ten minutes and three slides I decided I had to organize myself so that I wouldn't babble on so I wrote something and then I realized that it is only three minutes, but then I'm going to show you eight slides and they can go in a loop. So, what I'm going to do is to describe my experience coming back to Taiwan and I hope that, in some ways, from that description, that there will be some issues that come up that will contribute to this topic. I returned to Taiwan in 1993, having lived for ten years studying in the US. Upon my return I worked in an artist run space called IT Park in Taipei. What made this space different from other galleries at that time was that it had a bar and the opening hours were from 1pm until 12 midnight. I was not only organizing exhibitions, answering phones, designing invitations and installing works, I was also the bar tender, who everybody was really friendly to, of course. During the time that I worked at IT Park I was forced to reconsider a lot of fundamental ideas about art and exhibitions, and the art audience in general.

Before returning to Taiwan, I considered a gallery to be a white non-space, with no particular architectural features, with bright lights that came from nowhere and cast no shadows, a sacred space that one entered with humility, quietly, and looked on at the art work with earnest concentration, hoping to walk away somehow more informed about our being in this world. All this changed for me in Taipei. The entrance to IT Park was barely visible. It was a narrow doorway sandwiched between a Korean barbeque and a stir-fry restaurant, in an unremarkable three-storey cement walk-up block. The walls were not so flat, smooth or white; the lighting was something that was very present, at times

theatrical; it was a place where people met, not necessarily to look at or talk about art, but perhaps art would be a subject of one of the conversations. At times, and most of the time, the art that was hanging in the gallery was just a background. The public that came to the exhibitions constantly questioned the legitimacy of the artwork on display and the enterprise if art as a whole, while sipping on their coffees. Many artists came to the gallery in the evenings and debated their ideas about the exhibition and art in general over their beers and cocktails. Reflection mingled with intoxication. The gallery never closed for installation or de-installation; the exhibition started when the artist brought his work into the exhibition space; the public was free to drink in the bar and watch the installation of the coming show, and perhaps at times also offer to lend a helping hand. The exhibitions were not static displays of objects, but the process as a whole, from the hanging to the breaking down of shows, on view to all as a whole.

CM: Thank you Michael. Our final speaker, before we open it up for discussion, is King-chung Siu. He is programme leader of the BA (hons.) Art and Design in the education programme at Hong Kong Polytechnic, and he is an art and design commentator, and an installation artist as well, and an independent curator and founding member of the Hong Kong Curatorial Collective Community Museum project. Thank you...

SKC: I think I am the most radical one as far as the challenge of the limitation of three slides. I am showing 200 slides, each at a three second interval, so it becomes a kind of backdrop for me – once we reach ten minutes its finished. So it is a kind of backdrop conversation I would say. At lunch, one of my colleagues commented about me that I have been in the field for so long that I don't know how to distinguish art and design and education anymore, and I think this is quite true in this sense, because the work that we do as a community museum project is trying to break these kinds of boundaries. The community museum project is a collective without a museum, so we are doing projects without a museum. So, as you can imagine, we are trying to do projects in the community, we engage people, and we want to "inventorize" (to make an inventory) of what is interesting in culture. We don't care whether this is art, design, or whatever, not even a museum. But, having said that, I think that museum methods are a really interesting approach for us to do things with culture, because in a museum we have this kind of text book approach, we have to acquire collections, we have to preserve those collections and conduct research, interpretation and then we disseminate things and we put on exhibitions and we communicate to the audience – so far so good. But somehow, what to be collected or what to be researched is quite limited to a very limited notion of what we now think should be collected or researched. So what we are doing is to start going around the city and we thought that a city is already a museum. Then we try to find interesting insights or themes from the city, and then, by looking into these themes, we try to do curatorial work together with the public.

As you can see from some of the images on the slides, here are some of our ordinary life experiences. My colleagues and I usually carry a camera, as well as my students, and we try to discover themes, and once the collection is mature we start to think about what is

significant about the collection of images. These are not elitist art products; these are art and design objects by the populace, from everyday life. So this is what we do. For example, this project is on the theme of preventative measures; once we find a theme we start to look into the area and see whether we could develop something – this shows a risk preventative measure for the SARS. So what we are trying to do in a kind of curatorial sense is that we try to engage some of the students and also the public to work on these kinds of ideas and then, when the time is right, we put up an exhibition and we publicize it.

Ten minutes is such a long time...

Let me introduce some of the things here: for instance, this is a project that we did, collecting items from demonstrators, and then we tried to collect all the props from them from their street demonstrations and we tried to do research into it and find contacts and a story about the making of these demonstration objects, and then we put on an exhibition. Of course you can see there is a kind of classification there, and this is one of the museum or curatorial strategies – to classify things– and this one is, in fact Lee Tung Street. We did a project by sending a photographer up to the high rise to take pictures of these old Chinese buildings and we did some research into it. In the meantime, because we tried to engage with the community and we started to collect stories from the residents and then we tried to write up a publication on the project and we even use this brochure to do fund-raising for these activist groups to support their activism. This group is against the urban redevelopment plans of Lee Tung Street in Wan Chai a few years ago. Also, because we know the residents, by doing this kind of research and project we started to think about a series of tours of these streets, by engaging the residents to become guides leading these kind of cultural tours, explaining what the streets are about.

This is one of my student's works, who went to Lee Tung Street, and tried to find interesting DIY objects that they made. And this is an exhibition I was working on with ordinary daily life objects. This is essentially what I collect at home –all these objects became an exhibition which has some kind of design implication in it. You can see some of the questions that we raised at the exhibition hall. So these are all ordinary objects that we want to really put into a curatorial framework and engage the public.

I think this is one of the projects that one of my students did. He went around a block of buildings and started to collect stories from all the residents and engage them by creating projects with the residents and also the students, and then, as you can see, there was some confrontation with a policeman, and all these things. But the project itself is what we call visualizing the community. In fact what they put on this storefront is their proposal for keeping the residential area. So, OK, my ten minutes is finished.

CM: Thank you all. I think that how we will proceed is to allow the opportunity for the panellists to ask each other a question, if they have one, and if not we will open it up to all of you to have an open discussion.

RA: Can I have your pictures?

DA: There is something very lively to what you are doing, and usually when we talk about museums there is always this corporate feeling that comes attached to the museum, or maybe sometimes museums throw a deadening blanket in a way that you cannot touch your own object anymore, like Ron was saying with his own creation. So, for instance, how would you like to see your project in relation to a museum?

SKC: We don't have any expectations of putting our projects inside a museum but we do have a very strong urge to curate projects with a proper museum method, whatever that means, so that it can really try to "inventorize" culture in one sense, and then engage the public in another sense. And I think the museum process is actually a good platform for us to produce social affairs. I have not explained very clearly about how these projects work. In fact the street projects over there were actually some of the activist movements in Hong Kong that tried to use a different kind of tactic to involve the public as well as draw public opinion. And we also involved artists there and we involved students and the media and this is how we use, in a sense, art design and education, visual culture or whatever. You could design things with this kind of method and try to make sense of culture. So, to answer your question, I don't know we can be involved with the museum, or M+, or whatever, but if the occasion or the opportunity comes we might think of projects that would probably engage the community around the West Kowloon District, engaging the residents, or whatever, to do something because we believe that there ought to be some kind of value in everyday life artefacts and practices.

CM: It raises a question too about one of the cornerstones of museums which has been about collecting and whether, in fact, you're talking more like a model of a museum, and I understand the tactical use of the museum in terms of being able, in a sense, to concentrate and focus on a particular product or body of work and also to have it as a place where the public can come, but it leaves the idea of collecting unanswered in a sense and the model of the Kunsthall, as it's called, the non-collecting museum, seems to me to be implicit in a way in all of your presentations, in that, yes, the museum can become a kind of platform for showing works and projects which are perhaps not finished, or that are in progress, but how do you then begin to even think about the role of the museum as a collecting institution. How do you start to make valuations, and is the criteria, in terms of value, as you refer to, does it begin to be a criteria which divorces itself, or is divorced from the kinds of values which are implicit in the practice itself? Ron what do you think in terms of your...

RA: I think it makes you think of a 'situationist' exhibition at the ICA. Later, I mean after the event, people came to the ICA and it was a nightmare for the installers, they disturbed them. The installers had finished the room and they came in and they wrecked it because

there was this problem of... we work outside the museum, outside the system and yet we are here in a place that is worse than a museum, we're in an art fair, you know, the art market... and you're behaving!

We had a Banksy on the door of my studio and we were very upset one day that Camden Council painted over it. We thought we could take the door and sell it. Very nearby there was another Banksy that Camden Council started restoring once a week, protecting it. So, I mean, there is this problem, which I am sure you are aware of, that we dislike, you know, I was saying today that I feel like we are animals and curators are zoo keepers, but there is some safety in the zoo, you know, you are fed on time...

CM: Michael, what do you think about this, in terms of your own practice and your movement in and out of the museum?

ML: Basically I have made a point of never making work in an exhibition space, first of all, and I think that a large part of my work has always gone outdoors in a public space. From my description you can see how all this kind of distrust about this idea of how we should have an exhibition was kind of healthy. At first, when I came back to Asia, it wasn't a criticism, it was more of a complaint: why can't the walls be perfect? Or why can't we have better lighting? But in the end it turned out to give me a lot of information and a whole other view of things, and to realize that maybe this isn't even necessary at all, that this hardware, these walls, aren't even necessary, so today's talk about how can we have a museum... I don't know... it's like what we say about collecting objects; I remember we had a talk like this in Fukuoka, when the Asian art museum opened there, they asked artists about what was happening now that meant artists were creating work outside of the museum. And I thought that was such a waste of space, maybe it could be made into a great hotel or something, and we could just move everything out, and I think to have a street museum seems more engaging in this time.

CM: Has that been your experience elsewhere too? Do you think this is something particular to the region or do you think that in America, having worked there...

ML: Well, there was a time in the '80s when there was the economic crisis and a lot of the galleries had closed, I remember, and it created an interesting situation where a lot of young gallerists would open their house to show the work or, I remember, I think it was the Regan projects had rented a room at the Mondrian Hotel for three days to show video works, and you would show up at three o'clock in the morning and they would serve you coffee and you would lie on the bed in the suite and watch the videos. So, I think things were already there. Moving back here was just more extreme and... because I was working in the gallery and I was constantly having to defend what we were doing there; everyday I was asked, well, where is the art? Is this art? To the point where I had to react, I had to, you know...

CM: And in terms of Seoul, working in Seoul, do the groups and organizations, particularly perhaps your historical work now, in terms of reflecting back to 1992 onwards. Do you think it is changing in terms of the way in which the practice, in terms of the relation between art and design and craft, do you think there is something very particular about Korea and Seoul? I mean, it has had a long and very powerful tradition in terms of design, and I wondered whether you think these sorts of issues also have a bearing on what is going on in Korea.

LG: Well actually, there is a strong tendency, especially amongst youngsters, to believe that there is no distinction between the aesthetics or the non-aesthetics, or design, craft and other things, but I think that is bullshit. Actually, most of the DT members really do care about the distinction. Even when they make a fusion kind of thing with each other they always try to make a beautiful parting line between each of those professions, actually. We always want the audience to be able to read the parting lines, so they always use professionals at source to make a mesh up (you know, the mesh up is a mixing technique to make a song, with so many different resources). Actually, in the '90s there were so many off-museum activists in Korea in the art and design field. Nowadays design is a kind of political matter in Korea. The bureaucrats were pouring a lot of money in, and they were thinking that the distinction between art and design was meaningless at this moment, but I don't think so, and I don't really think of a museum as a museum. Actually, we can look at the case of MO, Museum of the Ordinary, it is kind of tricky, it is not a museum, just a travelling... thing. And I have to mention the case of Fluxus and the Nam June Paik Archive. Even Fluxus was a kind of museum thing but in the end the collection moved to MoMA and Nam June Paik donated the whole archive to the Smithsonian Museum. So, in the end, the museum's function as an archive is really important— we always have to think about that aspect. So when we are talking about museums and not carting about the distinction it sounds cool, but that is not the truth, actually. That's my opinion.

CM: Let's open it up for all of you to ask some questions, and I will take them as they come. And if you have one particular speaker you would like to address it to, please do...

Q1: I would like to ask a question to King, because you are collecting things from the street, which are daily objects used by people, or non-designers who are making things from these everyday objects. It might be your statement of irony or something because, the way you display it is as actually like an authority, or museum setting because, I think I saw a Hello Kitty student bag in a plastic box as if you shouldn't touch it. So is it a statement of irony or do you have some kind of meaning, or any comments?

SKC: Yes, I think the notion of a museum is always this kind of authoritative figure. So, in a sense this is intentional, because what we collect is somehow from the grass root

culture, and usually, we don't even come to this side of the city, not to say the convention centre or the elitist art fair. They have no chance to do anything in this kind of authoritative setting. So in that sense if you really want to engage the public...

RA: But she is asking maybe you are the author of this work...not the Hello Kitty creator, you are the author.

SKC: Yes, I am the author as a curator.

RA: Some sort of curator! We all know that curators think they are the authors of the work.

SKC: OK, so this is deliberately putting... with my authority I put these things into the museum setting. But on the other hand, some of our other projects are to engage them, becoming a kind of curator as well, (not the Hello Kitty project that we did). In fact the Anonymous Object project was where we were in search of anonymous designers. We wanted to trace back who designed those things and we built a website so that if they wanted they could provide us with information about that, because these are things that we don't know in our culture. Unfortunately the designer of that Hello Kitty bag didn't call us but in fact, some of them...

RA: Wasn't your call to him to call you like a piece of art? Even you putting it on the web and you were pretending, genuinely pretending to...

SKC: Yes we were pretending, because we were using this museum notion of authority.

RA: Maybe he doesn't have access to the internet?

SKC: You saw some posters on my slides? We put posters on the street saying that we were looking for the designers.

ML: And what is it that you're trying to achieve by finding the author? Just out of curiosity...

RA: Give him an award.

LG: So in that kind of situation, you really can't trace back the original designer of the pieces?

SKC: Yes and no. Some of them do come and supply the information but we couldn't contact some of them.

RA: I put into production a piece I found in the market, and I called it *Anonymous Chair*, waiting to be sued by someone; it is in production by an Italian company, it was something based on an hexagonal nut, really nice, and no-one turned up.

ML: What I'm trying to understand is by finding the author, is that somehow completing this museum process that you're talking about? To give authorship to an anonymous object?

SKC: Yes, in a sense, for that particular project.

CM: But I guess the question is also the only way of the project being completed, if you want a complete project, in the context of a museum, is to have an author. So, are you being ironic or are you describing a system by the completion of this project, which I think is what Michael's asking. Or, in fact, is it an impulse which coincides with the logic of a museum but actually doesn't reflect on the logic of a museum?

SKC: It does reflect on the logic of a museum, I think, because somehow, if we assume that all these art work shave an author, we have to believe that everything in our world has an author, right? So why talk about those kinds of author, and not this kind of author? So this is the irony that we are talking about, firstly. And secondly, if the system, or the game, is completed I think we could collect a lot of information that is coming from the everyday world around us which we have not even paid attention to before. And I think this is very significant because in museum practice we always want to find meanings in things, no matter whether they are relics of the past, or whatever. In a sense we do use the museum method or mentality to trace back meanings and the history of things. We pitch it in a different dimension, which is the everyday life dimension.

AR: Are we really interested to know who designed the fountain that was the toilet? Is it irrelevant?

SKC: I am interested, I really am. Who designed this table, this chair?

DA: I think the real issue is, if we're talking about the museum, not particularly your project, and your response to it, that can be part of a museum programme, I mean if we're talking about a museum, in a museum you need to have the community outreach, you need to have the dialogue, back and forth, in whatever form that takes is debatable, whether you like it or you hate it... but the idea that the museum is a generator of ideas, the museum as think tank, the museum as power plant that's really open to the city, let's say commissioning artists to take over the city, working with the highest end of displays, working with the internet, post internet, working with very experienced... sometimes the live element to me is whether you engage the community or whether you really have an incredible performance programme where you allow people to engage immediately, it's sort of post-internet... You know, you cannot zip experiences; you cannot download visceral moments and experiences, so really creating a bit of a dialogue. I think that's what we're looking for when we're talking about museums. I live in China and there I see the whole museology phenomenon, and there are similar things going on in Turkey as well in private museums. There are a lot of issues with programmatic coordinates; there are a lot of typical issues. I mean we are seeing an unprecedented number of dealers in China. So if we're discussing art and design in relation to a potential museum then I don't really know too much about it. I think that dialogue is definitely necessary. I don't know if Ron doesn't agree with the method of what you're doing or just finds it futile, there is definitely an outreach to the community and of course there is a value, I hope, in everything like that.

CM: Well the issue of authorship is a topic in itself, which one day may be addressed, but we know that in the 1960s or so, certain people tried to say the death of the author, as in Michel Foucault's famous essay about the death of the author, and it came right back, you know, and one just wants to ask, I think, or at least pose the question "why is authorship so important in terms of knowing?" and let's take the museum as one site, which in a sense fetishizes authorship, without any doubt. People go to a work and see that it is by such-and-such. What does it really tell them in terms of an appreciation of the work? And this begins a whole chain of questions. And I think the relevance of it to today's decision is clearly that when you see Michael's work, for example, it is a work that seems to me to be activated as a work on the street. And so what something happens, if that work was alive, in a sense, in the street, and it took on meaning through an engagement with it, if it is then removed as an object and placed in a museum, it seems to me that everything starts to change. And you can then begin to think about maybe there is a logic to authorship. But there is a whole series of questions here, and I think in a sense today's panel does raise this issue about authorship in a very real sense.

I am wary that there are other questions, so let's take another one.

Q2: The British Museum in London sees itself as custodians of world treasures, rightly or wrongly. I just want to share a very quick story with you. A friend of mine from Hong Kong recently travelled to London for the very first time, and the British Museum was

one of the things that she really wanted to see. She was really looking forward to it. She told me that half an hour later she was out. I was really surprised and didn't go into details. The very brief explanation is "I'm just not that cultural", which I hear a lot here. I want to ask you all from the panel, what do you think, realistically, artists and designers could do more to help museums broaden their appeal, particularly for members of the public who think that museums are not for them?

CM: Would anyone like to respond?

SKC: This is my approach, so did I answer your question with my presentation?

Q2: I thought your presentation and that exercise was inspiring but there are cases where antiquities can't be taken out of the museum, for all sorts of reasons – security and other obvious reasons. So how do you bring audiences to museums when they have a mental block, thinking that "it's not for me", "I don't understand", when I go in I feel intimidated", or "it's just boring"?

SKC: So it's a method, and I think there are already antiquities on the street and this is the redevelopment programme that the government is doing and all these residents participating together in order to maintain those antiquities. So they are really using their heart to engage in this kind of experience.

CM: Surely the onus falls, in part, back on the museum and the personnel working there, as opposed to the practice. One supports creativity, institutions respond to that and if there is any meaning and significance given to the institution, it is in its ability to be able to respond and I would say that a lot of museums have had to think very hard about how to respond, because it needs a sea change in terms of their policy. What Ron's story, his moral tale if you like, shows is the inability in a sense for certain museums to have that agility. They don't; they're not agile any more. They have set up a particular function in which certain sorts of practices are slotted in, but the MoMA, for example, we know when it was built, at the height of Modernism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when there were certain divisions and you see it also in the way in which they tell their story. They tell their story in such a way, I heard recently Glen Lowry speak about the history of MoMA – he is unable, really, to be able to speak about those instances, and we've heard some of them this afternoon, where in fact there really is a merging, or overlap and interface between art and design, craft and others. They don't know, actually, really how to deal with that stuff. Occasionally there will be special exhibitions but in terms of the presentation there are departments, and heads of departments, and art is art and design is design. This is very instructive, and it is most instructive – not in terms of the way in which these artists and people working with artists, and how members of this panel are working – but it is instructive in terms of the future of museums, and what they do about museums. But

they've got to be responsive now otherwise they have no meaning, not really, in terms of being a part of today's culture.

DA: In response to your question I think it's a no brainer to say education, outreach, really education, education... When you talked about your friend who didn't feel cultural enough, I mean definitely that's about education. On the other side, museums are trying to figure out how they can do more outreach, for example the New Museum consulted McKenzie, the consultancy company, to see what's happening with museums. Many of us are really concerned with what's happening with the new museum, and many of us are looking up to it, so everybody is trying to figure out what the best way is to make the outreach. When you look at the future, and I don't want to fetishize the future as it is almost like the Art Deco period for Shanghai, it's the same thing, but it is the use of the mass communication channels for the early 20<sup>th</sup> century – what they've done was just incredible – from newspapers to manifestos, the way they spread them through airplanes and whatever. I think in the age of the internet it's about finding and integrating a mass communication channel much more efficiently – that's one thing, without getting into the whole 'spectacularization' economy as well, you have to refrain from that.

CM: I think the danger, as Daphne says, the danger is also to mis-read this, and I think some of the American, US, North American museums have mis-read this in so far as being concerned about how to get more audiences. It seems to me that's not the way to go. The way to go is to look at how we can better reflect what is going on today, creatively, because the creativity is coming from that audience, from that public. If you have a sense of being involved in supporting creativity today, you'll get the audience. And so that is the sort of difference, it seems to me, in terms of strategy.

Another question for our panel...

Q3: My question is about authorship and curation. And I would like to address it to the artist, and, you call yourself a designer, Ron?

RA: I'm a ping-pong player.

Q3: So, the classical, you consider arbitrary, definition, explanation, indication, what you will, of art and design, one providing problem solving and function, and the other one not at all. So how valid are they, or don't they exist, or are the fine lines dissolving as time goes on? I would like to have your views.

AR: Industrial design is a very anonymous profession with some exceptions – we all know who designed this (*RA holds up his iPod*). We know the name, but mostly we don't

know who designed this (*RA holds up a water bottle*), maybe you do, King? There isn't a cutting line between one and the other. For some people authorship is it, there is some pleasure in doing anonymous things. I think Achille Castiglioni, one of the greatest designers, thrived on the fact that many people use his light switch and no one knows who designed it – that is what gave him pleasure, he was the author of the story by the pleasure it gives him. So there is no escape.

LG: Well I think there is a distinction between a designer's design and an anonymous design, a traditional designer's design. Traditional designers are really happy with their anonymous status. Nowadays designer's design is a kind of ego trip; they are always pouring something out of their ego, like your work – it is so Ron Arad. Everybody knows of it. It is an ego trip. I can feel the aura of the ego from you here.

RA: I apologise for that.

LG: Thank you...

CM: That's very gracious of you! Any more apologies?

Q4: I would just like to follow upon the point that the gentleman at the back made. I don't think the problem was the failure of the museum, because I have also been to the British Museum, and it is a pretty dry place. The failure was in her own comment about herself, where she said that she didn't understand culture. And I think the panel discussion today, and just that little talk about ego, is quite interesting because what we don't have in Hong Kong is a very, and I'm talking about the masses of people here, is an appreciation of simplicity, and simplicity and beauty together – simple design, simple art, good art, bad art. The audiences here think that it is about ego, they think it is going up to the Peninsular Hotel and looking at the Stark installation there. And, I think what we need to learn in any debate about museums in this particular city is that we need to look at the very simple things in the city, and I think your presentation, King Chung, is about that. The appreciation of a great design company in Hong Kong, like the Freezing Hot company, which did fantastic design work for twenty-five years and is not known here by students (and we're talking about students who are not design students).

The sort of approach we take to our museums is to take people like your friend... thirty minutes in a museum, for me, is about right. I think we should go in, dip in, dip out, and I think that's true. Of course if you've paid a lot of money to go to London you want to spend a day there, but that's not actually the way to do it. So I think the sensibility needs to be raised in Hong Kong to appreciate all sorts of things on many levels – art and design on all sorts of levels – and the sorts of discussions that we have today because all of you are famous and we are here today to listen to you.

RA: We apologise again...

ML: But I think there is one issue that needs to be addressed here when we talk about museums and what a museum should be in Asia, and here in Hong Kong, is that really what is desirable to inherit this museum culture, because I think, in the letter that Charles sent to everybody talking about what we were going to talk about today was that museum culture is something that doesn't exist in this region. But everybody seems to be talking about this idea of how we want that legacy and we want to inherit that, and I kind of tend towards questioning all that and an ability for that to really kind of function here, even...

CM: Defne, what do you think about that in terms of Shanghai, the idea of Shanghai Modern, for example, which has been such a strong idea, and implicit in that, of course, is that art and design and architecture have been integral to the growth of a modern culture in Shanghai, and I guess a relatively cosmopolitan culture. Where do you see that lineage or heritage in terms of today and in terms of what's going on around you in Shanghai and China?

DA: In China, and I'm talking about Shanghai, you know, you can rent museums if you want to make an exhibition you get a floor plan with square footage, how much you can rent it for, there are about 300 exhibitions at the government museum every year, half of it is for rent, and therefore the programmatic co-ordinates get all confusing for the audience – this is Chivas Regal supported, this is Campari sponsored, this is etc. etc – so there is this whole logo economy that actually subsidizes the museum, because the museums don't have support from the government itself, the museum has to come up with alternative ways to generate revenue. With the Modern Museum, the Zendai Museum, it's a new phenomenon, to see a museum in the middle of a shopping mall/entertainment complex, next to Joe's Pizza, Starbucks, Carrefour, in the new part of Shanghai that is closer to the aesthetics of suburbia, is just... we are all trying to understand where it is going because it is somewhere at the cross section of an entertainment complex and visual arts. But then there are some really solid solo shows going on, they've embarked on a major initiative last year when they worked for 366 days with artists in everyday life, where the artist dissolves into everyday life, that looked relatively successful, even though the individual artists didn't have the experience that they wished for.

To me, I look at the museum these days, and think that the need is for a social space, which looks to your bar comment, that active social space needs happen, for sure, for a bit; and then there needs to be a whole study of psychology of a single child nation. I don't know whether the rule applies to Hong Kong or not but in China, the single children phenomenon is a whole other psychology that needs to be studied if we were talking about how we are going to capture the attention of the students – this is the internet generation, the single child generation – so I don't think those studies are being

done. What I think is going on is that the staff, the administration of the museum is really trying to make it up on the spot, coming up with solutions on the spot because they don't come from the lineage of tradition of museology, or they weren't trained in other museums around the world. So there is this on the spot solution. I think there are some museums in Europe and the US who can learn from some of those solutions they come up with, for sure, but on the other hand there are a lot of issues that need to be improved.

RA: It's not perfect, and it's constantly changing, maybe not fast enough. I remember once that I had to negotiate something with the V&A using their medieval section. It was very difficult and I realized that the person in charge of the medieval collection...the last thing he was interested in was the audience, the public. He was more interested in the pieces that he is collecting, keeping and studying. For him the public, us, visiting and breathing on the pieces, is a nuisance, an unnecessary evil. Maybe there is that side to museums, and then you think that maybe museums should learn to de-collect.

CM: I am not sure I can leave it on that note. Is there one final question?

Q5: I have a question that is directed at Ron and Michael. I was wondering how much context informs how you create your work; where the work is going to end up, how much of that informs the work you create?

ML: Maybe I can just answer that quickly first. For me it is everything because my work is made for a specific space, I have to go and measure the space. For me that is easy to answer because the context is everything, and how the work develops, too, within the context of Taiwan – at the time I was practicing there – was very important for me.

CM: Any other responses from the panel? I think we will wrap up there then. Thank you everyone for coming and let's thank especially the speakers.