

ReORIENT¹: RESEARCHING TAIWANESE DESIGN HISTORY IN THE CONTEXT OF WORLD DESIGN HISTORY

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ABSTRACT:

In the written history of graphic design Euro-American modernism and postmodernism figure large, destining a local design culture like that of Taiwan complete invisibility in terms of world design. In the light of Taiwanese design's absence from general histories of design, this paper argues for the re-conception of design history from a deeper historical perspective. Acknowledging both local and international developments and the complex relations between them, especially in curriculum in design education, is fundamental to the well-being of design in any locality, the elaboration of design practice from the basis of local cultural knowledge and an awareness of international contexts protecting design from creative exhaustion. This shift, however, necessarily involves the reorientation of some entrenched aspects of the practice of design history, particularly its narration through art-historical approaches. This paper begins the task of understanding Taiwanese design dialogically, that is both within its own historical context and against the background of the development of global design, arguing the case for 'globalization' as a means of understanding the nuances of design in globalization.

KEYWORDS: *Taiwanese design history, globalization, glocalization*

1. TAIWANESE DESIGN HISTORY FROM A WORLD HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

*...we need to know more of the process of history-writing...Writers of history are not just observers. They are themselves part of the act and need to observe themselves in action.
John King Fairbank (1969: vii)*

The power of globalizing forces to effect cultural erasure and homogenization has been hotly debated in academic and popular circles for more than a decade now, reflecting mounting anxiety over the future of local and regional cultures. Yet others argue that the cultural traffic in the present is not all one way. Appadurai (1990:295), for one, sees the central tension in the contemporary world as that between 'cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization.' This viewpoint manifests the entanglement of Taiwan's history. Taiwan's sense of marginality is intensified by its relationship with China, which has engineered Taiwan's exclusion from international organizations like the WTO. In Taiwan industrial production is oriented to the international market place, being focused on computers, communication and consumer electronics while digital content industries such as games, animation and media design are on the rise. At the same time, there are also mounting efforts to ground Taiwanese identity in the country's history, natural environment and the culture of the island's indigenous peoples and those immigrant groups that arrived from mainland China before 1945, the Hakka and the Hoklo, leading to a revaluing of traditional crafts and design.

The health of Taiwanese design depends on establishing what has been distinctive in its development beyond the tangled Chinese, Japanese and Euro-American influences on Taiwan's material culture but this can only come from solid research into the country's design history. Chinese design historian Wendy Siuyi Wong depicts Taiwanese design as following in the footsteps of developments in Hong Kong and she predicts its future will be determined by what unfolds in China and Hong Kong (Wong, 1995, 2001). In researching the history of Taiwanese design there is an additional problem-the embryonic nature of Chinese design history, which itself did not emerge until 1979 (Wong 2001, 2005). Similarly, Matthew Turner, one of the few historians to pay attention to Asian design history, notes that prior to 1960 Hong Kong design 'simply was believed not to exist' (1995:212). For Wong the neglect of Chinese graphic design in China is an effect of the predominant propaganda role it served for the Chinese communist party before the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1979 (Wong, 2001). After 1979 design in China and Asian countries other than Japan is neglected for being considered to imitate the values of the West's industrialized and commercialized culture.

The perception of imitation has seen design historians and critics dismiss the development of much Asian design (Chou, 2005; Wong, 2001). Even worse, the perceived derivativeness of the design output of Asian nations is claimed as an extension of Western design. Wong is rare in attributing the development of Taiwanese graphic design to precedents in Hong Kong, although Hong Kong designers such as Kan Tai Keung have been invited to Taiwan many times to exhibit

their work and participate in design competitions, and such designers certainly had influence on poster design in late twentieth century Taiwan. A more typical reading of the formative influences on Taiwanese graphic design are the promotion of industrialization and design education during the Japanese colonization, the Chinese nationalists' nostalgia for the cultural inheritance of mainland China after 1945 and the constant influence of Japanese and Western designers and design educators. The trend for studying design abroad in the United States, Europe or Japan after 1980 is also cited as important in bringing specific models of design practice and education into Taiwan, intersecting with Taiwan's growing patterns of international business and marketing, which created a demand for more trained designers and the consequent establishment of new design schools and the division of design departments from art departments. This is different to what Lai (2002) and Lin (2003) have identified, with significant influences on Taiwanese in the lifestyle of early Hoklo immigrants from China's southern Fukien Province.

Identifying something distinctive in a national design culture against evidence of derivativeness is an issue for many countries. In discussing the 'situatedness' of Australian industrial design, Jackson (2002) argues that Denmark, Italy, Japan and Sweden have been much more successful in developing culturally specific and economically sustainable industrial design cultures than Australia despite Australia's certain natural and geographic uniqueness. He acknowledges that these nations have had longer than Australia to develop an independent design culture but argues that each shows a much greater desire to present their cultural individuality to the world, including to through design. Jackson shows that a sense of distinctiveness is introduced into the discourse of Australian design through the myth of Australian design ingenuity, regarded as the product of Australia's geographic isolation and tough environmental conditions, emerging in the early pioneers' particular skill in adapting European farming tools to the Australian setting. For Jackson, however, this facility does not equal cultural specificity and he argues that 'Australian industrial design' is more properly referred to as 'design activity in Australia'.

Jackson's observations on the complexities of understanding Australian industrial design hold lessons for approaching Taiwanese design history. Yau's study of the design of Taiwanese alcohol labels from 1895 to 1970 is a good example of what is possible, applying a panoptic approach to the analysis of their development, which encompasses the social, economic, political and cultural environment of Taiwan as well as industrial processes (Yau, 2005). The study is highly effective in locating these artifacts in a specific time and space rather than just treating them as a sequence of aesthetic entities characterized by changing imagery and graphic styles.

2. A GLOCAL PERSPECTIVE ON DESIGN HISTORY

Design historians have long argued that the integral principles of graphic design history need to move beyond art historical models (Forty, 1986; Walker, 1989; Woodham, 1995; 2001). Many examples of Taiwanese graphic design share characteristics with international design. To switch the focus in Taiwanese design history from the current 'dependency' model, it must firstly be recognized that design activity is the product of a commercialized and industrialized society. This may seem to make it hard to separate the history of Taiwanese graphic design from that of the cultures that developed industrial capitalism, just as it is also difficult to untangle it from that of the nations that politically colonized Taiwan, especially now culture is accepted as an inherent extension of its social context.

While wishing to arrive at a more complex account of Taiwanese graphic design history it is hard to deny the impact of industrial modernization and colonialism though there is a model for moving forward. In the 1970s Taiwanese intellectuals engaged in a major debate regarding the country's literature, which contrasted Taiwanese consciousness to expressions of Chinese nationalism. This debate encompassed many different ideological complexions, reflecting the complicated political and cultural history of Taiwan (Chen, 2002 40; 121). Some argued Chinese nationalism worked against the influence of Japanese colonial consciousness over the island. Supporters of Chinese Nationalism of China characterized the movement for Taiwanese literature as the reproduction of left wing ideology with scant loyalty for Chinese culture (Yu 1977; Xhu 1980: 214). Out of this debate came the controversial argument that indigenous culture had had a wide impact on Taiwanese literature, modern dance, music and visual arts, resisting the authority of imported cultures and political regimes and resulting in the development of a local hybrid culture (Huang, 1995; Lyu, 1992). This position pre-empts later arguments about the criticality implicit in the condition of 'postcoloniality' (Pieterse 1995) that recognize the inevitable hegemony and absolute essentiality of primordial ties, both endogenous and exogenous, while at the same time rebuilding the energy and character of the current culture, and set up an environment of design discourse (Conces, 2005).

Taiwan's graphic design history begins with the crafts of Taiwan's indigenous groups, through to those of early migrants from China's Fujian province. Japanese occupation brought industrialization and the rise of fine art design. We must not forget the influences from other coastal cities such as the design of Hong Kong, and we must take into consideration race, colonialism, manufacturing and production practices, as well as the multiple levels of the political

environment. At the same time, we must coordinate our research with the current industrial structure, economical development and present cultural status of Taiwan. Only then will research into Taiwan's graphic design history emerge from modernism's tropes of 'canon admiration', 'mass production' and 'style analysis', which typically see design history focus on the epochal significance of the artistic creativity of a small group of celebrated men (Buchanan, 1998). What is needed is more analysis of influence of design over the 'texture of everyday life', with greater emphasis on 'the role and behaviour of the consumer and user' (Woodham, 2001; 23).

Those who study and research the history of Taiwanese design in 21st century have to be aware of the overwhelming impact of globalization. Investigation of the special meaning of Taiwanese design in the context of global design is vital if Taiwanese design is to flourish. Theorists of globalization offer a number of standpoints that suggest it is now more possible to write history from the perspective of formerly marginalized areas. Cultures, it is argued, are becoming ever more heterogeneous while former distinctions between centre and periphery have broken down. Likewise, in a world characterised by global flows and exchanges of finance, information, goods, people and representations, all distinctions are relative while subjectivities are open to hybrid influences, the multiplicity of meanings and the condition of nomadism.

It cannot be denied that Taiwanese graphic design reflects the influence of European aesthetic, economic, social and technological perspectives (Kaelble, 2005). Conversely, while peripheral design nations have been involved in imitating elements of international design in the hope of acceptance and recognition, when the adherents of Euro-American design look out they are often unable to recognise anything from a non-industrialized, non-capitalist point of view.

Taiwan, subservient or silent for so long when it comes to the writing of its own graphic design history, has models available to look to in reconstructing that history. Brazil, Cuba, India, Turkey and Mexico have actively re-interpreted their design culture and history (Margolin, 2005). Fundamental to this is understanding the epistemological underpinnings of Western design history-especially the association between the development of design itself and those viewpoints-before turning to native cultural specialty in order to rewrite its design history (Uriarte, 2005). In producing the design history of Mexico, researchers took graphic design as a tool of progress, using it as an influence that had forged a distinctive modernism. Similarly, in exploring the Mexican struggle to achieve modernity, they examined how the history of being colonized at different times by the powers of Spain, France and the U.S.A, had created a specific culture and identity not dependency (Casas, 1997).

Understanding these effects can have an important impact on how future designers are educated. Poonam Bir Kasturi, an Indian educator and craft expert, bases creativity training for future craft practitioners on the modern values of reflection, critical thinking, and experimentation but seeks to maintain the identity and integrity practices of Indian craft traditions by bringing student groups to talk and work with established practitioners, thereby avoiding the destabilization of craft communities (Scotford, 2005). Endeavors in different regions suggest the importance of historical and cultural context, arguing that design practice makes most sense from the local level. This suggests that for Taiwanese graphic design history research must be undertaken from the perspective of the design activity and specific socio-cultural factors, accepting the effects of past colonisation and marginalized but without this being regarded as a negative influence.

3. ReORIENT TAIWAN

In order to build a history of Taiwanese graphic design it is crucial to define its characteristics and capabilities on the basis of solid historical research that eschews centre-periphery structures. Terry Eagleton proposes that 'global thinking' shouldn't necessarily mean the centralization of power but rather the integration of local and indigenous criteria into global networks against a tide of irreversible cultural loss (Eagleton, 2005).

Generally there are four major stages to producing design history. The first primarily involves identifying and compiling historical artifacts and adopting categories through which to analyze and order them. For example, Tsuen-Shiung Yau has researched numerous books on the form and style of historical artifacts of Taiwanese graphic design by sorting them into typologies like packaging design or labels for different goods.² (Yau, 2005) Similarly, Pin Jang lin has used stylistic frameworks to research magazines, newspapers and posters of the period of Japanese occupation.³ These researches shows how the model of industrial production that became pervasive in Taiwan was adapted from Japan and later from the USA, but what is important to stress is that external approaches were not transposed directly but were adapted to fit the domestic context. This resulted in some in the creation of hybrid products, like a beer label design Takasoga beer designed in 1920, was actually imitated from the design of Yebisu beer in Japan. (Figure 1, 2) Ruei Guang sake label designed in 1930 was a phoenix snap and a spike of rice as a background, and the front was a rising sun with some 'auspicious cloud'. (Figure 3) Ruei Guang sake had another label designed in 1938; it had two phoenixes on each side to greet the rising sun flame which was a symbol of the admirable colonization of Japanese. (Figure 4) One more example is a series of labels produced for Longevous Liquor. Longevous Liquor was produced

and designed after Taiwan Restoration and particularly made for Chiang Kai-shek's birthdays. For some political and historical motive, the Chiang Kai-shek government had a strong persistence of Chinese tradition and also tried to eliminate all influence of Japanese and domestic culture. As a result, graphic design in that partial time period had also showed the nostalgia of China, and political propaganda. One Longevous Liquor made in 1969, its' label and packaging were designed in red and gold, as the golden color signifies supremeness and honorableness in China, and the red indicates auspiciousness and joyousness. A Chinese character of 'longevity' (SHOU) was shown on the label, and as the pattern of packing paper. (Figure 5)



Figure 1: I Takasoga beer label design in Taiwan, 1920



Figure 2: Yebisu beer label design in Japan, 1920



Figure 3: Rwei Guang sake label designed, 1930.



Figure 4: Rwei Guang sake label designed, 1938.



Figure 5: Longevous Liquor for Chiang Kai-shek's birthday, 1969.

(Figure 1-5: from Yau, Tsuen-Shiung, (2003), *Brewing Age-The designs of Taiwanese Alcohol Labels during 1895~1970*, Taipei, Walkers Culture, p.56, 67, and 140)

The second stage takes design artifacts as the product of a particular time and space, bound to contextual factors both substantial and unsubstantial. For example, Jing Yang's publications investigate the development of Taiwanese industrial design in the light of cultural, political, social and educational issues. Ju-Joan Wong argues it is crucial to relinquish deference to the western design canon and see past stylistic similarities to understand a much more complex story of the development of Taiwanese industrial design as an expression of government policy and the influence of the manufacturing sector and economic environment. Wong questions the discourse of the predominant design history, calls attention to the need to reconstruct the interpretations, viewpoints and methods, and read design as the products of daily life in its entirety. (Wong, 2005) Wen Huei Chou (2005, 2006) urges researchers to adjust the perspectives of reading and writing design histories, and to reframe the understanding of design history, not for the flavor, style or idolism but because of the nature of the design, by taking design activities not as a way of creating art, but as a way of solving a problem and human communication.

The third approach considers the curriculum in design education institutions. Yang, Cheng, Shiung and Huang have investigated the structures, policy, objectives and influences on Taiwanese design curricula over the past 50 years, showing the impact of ideological priorities in design education and the connection between curriculum and the development of Taiwanese design, with the aim of better orienting them to the future needs of Taiwan's economy and society.

The fourth approach focuses on the history of Taiwanese design's professional bodies and educational institutions, emphasizing those that have played an important role in the development of Taiwanese design. Lin chronicles a period beginning with the Japanese occupation to the present, focusing on institutions and organizations that have had the most impact on the development of Taiwanese design by, for example, organizing design competitions hosted by corporations or government to stimulate design achievement. The role of leading design magazines in supporting specific design trends and recognizing a canon of foremost Taiwanese designers is also noted, as is the influence of government policy and promotional initiatives in supporting certain designers, industries and products, starting with the Trade Expositions founded during the period of the Japanese occupation and continuing until the 1990s.

Taiwanese design historians are faced with many dilemmas, due in the main to the predominance of western methodological conventions from art history and the history of architecture, especially the forging of design canons. The elaboration of graphic design has been to separate from art

history for some time, having established its own profession and industrial status, which makes its continued dependence on masters, styles and aesthetics strange.

Since Taiwanese design history has been dominated for so long by western mainstream perspectives, native design has been neglected, resulting in ill preserved artifacts, especially graphic design work which needs careful conservation. In fact, very few design artifacts have been kept outside those of very well known artists. Fortunately, the growth of post-graduate design research has increased research into Taiwanese design history. Yang and Shiung focus particularly on the period of the Japanese occupation. Lin is locating and analyzing examples of Taiwanese graphic design from the past one- hundred years, which will enable more studies to take place. However, limited institutional, government and technical support for this research means that researchers need to be very self-motivated despite the importance of their work in recovering the missing pieces of Taiwanese design history. Hence, a platform is needed to demonstrate what has been found and achieved and disseminate it publicly. For example, the Portugal's On-line Museum of the Portuguese Poster, the Dutch Poster Museum, Hoorn, and the Warsaw Poster Museum all ensure that design artifacts remain in good condition and is available for research and education purposes.

Upon this research, there are some official/nonofficial institutes which are also accelerating the onset of programs counterplotting the vanishment of native culture from design history. One such example is the Taiwan Design Center, a governmental research institute founded in 2003, which started a project named 'The Database of Taiwan Design Elements' in 2005. This project invites a number of researchers/designers from a broad and varied range of design fields such as graphic design, product design, architecture, history, culture and heritage, to collect and sort hundreds of design source elements into this Database. This database can be considered to enrich the form, content, culture, religion, and material etc. of design artifacts on many different levels within the context of Taiwanese culture. After opening this database to the public, the Taiwan Design Center sponsors a design exhibition every year, aiming to inspire young designers through the awareness of native value, and to engage with the issue of globalization and its effects on industrial production in terms of cultural identity. A sub-project was opened, under the theme of 'benches', in order to put the database into practice. Benches are very common furniture apparatus used for casual seating arrangements, but carry extra significance in Chinese tradition and society. (Figure 6) Categorized as a natural object in the memory of the previous generation, it is gradually changing its image in the light of recent design, and the use of beech as a material which makes the chair sturdy and lightweight for better endurance and portability. The designs of



Figure 6: Traditional benches, <http://www.cspc.cyc.edu.tw/slong/index.htm>, accessed on Aug. 10, 2007

no back, no arm rest and width for easy straddling imply the attitude and degrees of freedom the chair could offer, whilst also allowing many people to share a bench and enjoy tea, food, and conversation together. Under the auspices of the sub-project, the curator invites fifty designers from well-known furniture manufacturers to design benches within a Chinese cultural context. The ultimate goal of this whole project is to



Figure 7: *Lighting Bench*, designed by Chih Wen Hsieh, photoed by Min Gia Chen

help young designers to manifest the living style and current cultural context in their design, whilst also encouraging designers to challenge and expand upon the limitation of industrial production and to rethink their attitude towards the influences of their own nation. Some examples shown show the designers integrating the functional with memories of yesteryear. Not only do they inherit the visual components from benches, but also reconsider this traditional product under current environmental considerations. One such design, called *Lighting Bench*, designed by Chih Wen Hsieh, keeps the size of the original bench, but adds a touch of contemporary styling through the use of modern straight lines and symbols. (Figure 7) Although it sticks to the original use of a bench, with its traditional sturdy frame for endurance, it is also lightweight for better portability and



Figure 8: *Bridae*. designed by Ryo Ho. photoed by Min Gia Chen



Figure 9: *Dancing Lion*, designed by Chih-Kang Chu, photoed by Min Gia Chen

easy straddling which also allows it to be transferred into indoor furniture, with a night light function added. The Second example, *Bridge*, is designed by Ryo Ho. He dwells on the sense of 'connection' and 'sharing' of benches, keeps the original image, but develops this into a concept to create a space for connection and sharing. The designer connects the significance of traditional benches, metaphorically using the visual implication of bridge, whilst adding the functionality of a desk to the design. (Figure 8) The third example shown below is *Dancing Lion*, designed by Chih-Kang Chu. The designer strengthens his memory from the scene of the Taoist temple, where seniors gather around the temple, having tea together, chatting, and playing chess, with the

occasional fair present in the background. He gives the bench a back piece, very similar in style to that of a deck chair. Deck chairs are usually associated with rest and relaxation, and conjure up an image of sitting beneath a tree, chatting with friends. During the design process, two extra legs appeared as they were necessary to support the structure. . To solve this problem, the designer symbolizes the six legs as a visual image of a lion dance, which is typical entertainment associated with fairs in Chinese traditional celebrations. The result of this symbiosis of traditional memory and contemporary design is a bench with a floral lion cloak draped over it. (Figure 9) As Chu i states in his description, "the bench has its own life now, and it is closer to my memory too". The outcomes of this experimental project are still unknown, though it is seen as a big step towards strengthening the significance of native life from various sources and engaging a wider viewpoint to our own design history.

Another design research that has derived from the Taiwan Design Center is called "*L' Beautiful Chaos*". This project invited the '*Design Together*' design association, which was formed by seven young independent designers, to incorporate features from current Taiwanese society into their design in an attempt to harness features from all levels and aspects of that society. Most of the designers have graduated from western nations, so they are schooled in western design education, its aesthetic and method, but they grew up and live in Taiwanese society. Two main objectives are established in this project; firstly, to stimulate designers to reconsider the meaning of current Taiwanese culture, and to transform those features in any level of their projects. With regard to Rung-Tai Lin's previous research, culture can be classified into three layers: (1) physical or material culture (2) social or behavioral culture, and (3) spiritual or ideal culture. (R., Lin, 2007) These invited designers harness different levels of culture into their design process as a way of stressing the uniqueness of Taiwanese culture. This is a direct way in which to preserve culture value in Taiwan, whilst also creating a new version of Taiwanese design, and providing a chance for Taiwan to relocate its design history amongst the overwhelming din of globalization. Secondly, to enable Taiwanese youth devote their design knowledge freely in an experimental design project. As designers in Taiwan are mostly subordinate to design departments in manufacturing companies, as compared with many freelance designers and small design studios in Europe, they have fewer opportunities to convey their personal philosophy and are bound to the constraints of manufacturing production and profit. Hence this project helps give designers an opportunity to reveal their own names and original creations to the public. This exhibition does therefore provide a stage for the designs of freelance artists and small designer studios, and encourage them to innovate and create without cultural restraint.



Figure 10: *Side Plates: the memory of feel*, designed by Chung Maio Shie



Figure 11: *For Give, For Get*, designed by Hsiao-Ying Lin

An example of this in practice is *Side Plates: the memory of feel*, designed by Chung Maio Shie. He tracks down the memory of feel which has been eliminated by a combination of mass and standardized production. In this project Shie intends to enhance the manual texture from traditional arts and crafts into the process of mass production, finding a balance between the two

production processes. In order to complete this task, he alters two steps in the manufacturing process: 1. increasing the consistency of slurry, and 2. changing every percentage of slurry syringing. Two results became apparent, 1. the size of plates changed, which decrease progressively based on the capacity of slurry, allowing the shapes to gradually change into a series of plates which can be utilized for different dishes, and 2. the natural corrugation created by the different consistency of slurry and varied drying times. This natural corrugation is the designer's forage into manifesting the initial feel of hand craft. (Figure 10) Another example is *For Give, For Get* from Hsiao-Ying Lin. She chose to use hand made paper, made from discarded recycled paper, as an artistic cradle of new life. It could be used as normal handmade paper, but after being discarded, water would cause new plants/ new life to sprout. Lin shows her affection towards nature and the living environment (Figure 11); she observes that as Taiwan has such a dense population, how we use/reuse the limited material available and becoming more thoughtful about the relationship between humans, and between humans and the environment is becoming a vital issue. This design is contributed to a public welfare for establishing the found for impoverished children afterward. With regard to Lin's design concept, this design may not engage with Taiwanese traditional culture, but it encompasses and encircles, with its observant, caring, transforming nature, whilst improving the quality of live under the context of Taiwanese society. They are primary tasks of design, and they are essential work that design history in Taiwan should be involved with.

4. CONCLUSION

How to understand design activity in Taiwan, a geographically, politically and culturally isolated island, reorganize the narration of its design history, and determine what to teach students in the design history course is a challenge for all involved in Taiwanese design history. It must form the basis of our design education, and it is essential for drawing up the foundation of the design curriculum in design schools and for establishing a design strategy for the market place.

Globalization initiates discourse in design. Globalization is here and now, and therefore now is the best time to examine the development of design, contextualize the history of Taiwanese design and define its characteristics distinguishing it from others. We also must identify those factors that conditioned Taiwan's design history by focusing upon aspects that best illustrate the national panorama within the global framework, both within its own historical context and against the background of the development of global design, arguing the case for 'glocalization' as a means of understanding the nuances of design in globalization. Besides, as Arif Dirlik argues, 'the narrative of capitalism is no longer a narrative of the history of Europe. For the first time, non-

European capitalist societies are making their own claims on the history of capitalism'. (Dirlik, 1994:51) Culture is defined by UNESCO as 'the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or of a social group, and it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs'. (UNESCO, Cited in Zietsman, 2006) Therefore to accentuate the significance of our own culture, value doesn't just convert forms and visual elements from traditional art and craft. As this research emphasized previously, to truly employ the cultural features into the design process and concept is the only way to revive the consciousness of local design and design history in globalization. Although Taiwan is in an almost impossible position to be able to take part as a spokesman of the capitalist societies in near future, China is definitely taking a decisive economical role in 21st century. There are more than four million Taiwanese residing in China. Taiwanese have transplanted the experience of OEM, export processing and the production chain to China for more than two decades, and there are over 4.48 hundred million US dollars in investment transferred from Taiwan to China. (M., Lin, 2007) Barely a decade ago, Taiwan made components or assembled machines designed elsewhere, and were only a marginal player in more lucrative segments of the electronics industry. Today its companies are increasingly proficient at original design, and dominate manufacturing in key categories. (Einhorn, 2005) Although the new form of capitalist society which is going to be created in China is still largely unknown, the engagement between Taiwanese design and new capitalist societies will have a new stage, which is going to mean a renaissance for Taiwanese design under the account of globalization, through reinterpretation and refining our own design history and identity, and creating our own brands whilst maintaining solid margins by delivering better performance and design. This is the only way to stay ahead for Taiwan, and a blueprint for other remote nations yet to appear in western design history.

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FOOTNOTES:

1 ReOrient is a term borrowed from Andre Gunder Frank, who argues that to understand world history it is necessary to look beyond recent Eurocentric frameworks to see the role of Asia in long term cycles of change and development.

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5 Maria Helena Ferreira Braga Barbosa, Anna Calvera, Vasco Afonso da Silva Branco, The Investigation in Design - The Creation of the On-line Museum of the Portuguese Poster, An ongoing project hosted by the Departamento de Comunicacao e Arte da Universidade de Aveiro, presented in Pride and Predesign conference May 2005 in Lisbon.
