

People. Chair – Freeman Lau (2003)

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Nearly all quality artworks have these common features: Originality, representation of a particular time period and characteristics of a special place. As an experienced designer and artist, Lau can demonstrate his originality and the trend of his time, be it graphic design or pure art creation, and display the essence of the reality with clarity and in the best mode of presentation.

Out of the above three features, Lau focuses much on originality. He believed that pioneer of a style wins most of the respect from others. On a contrary, imitators, no matter how dexterous their skills are, cannot avoid the final destiny of abandonment as time went by even if they can gain support at a specific time.

In the Urban Council Sculpture Design Award competition held in 1994, Lau had for the first time designed his first major outdoor sculpture “Searching for Fixation”, shaped after people and chair to express the craze of the Hong Kong people for social status at that time. This work of art that erects outside the Hong Kong Museum of Art symbolizes the anxiety encountered in the course of searching for position, but still, quest for directive to affirm his identity positively.

Since then, he has been creating a series of artworks, including posters and installations, with people and chair. His works reflect not only the weirdness of society, but also the subtle relationship between the tempo of contemporary life and his artistic cultivation. In fact, as a local bred artist, his works are always associated with Hong Kong society and reflecting the trend of his time.

Hong Kong underwent tremendous political changes around 1997 which set many people to strive for power and status. The chair was a good symbol of this phenomenon. In 1998, Lau held his “Searching for Fixation II” exhibition at the Hong Kong Fringe Club where he lined up a wall with chairs, which were commonly used by the colonial government. This work not only reflected the mixed feelings of the Hong Kong people who had to face the traditional establishment at that time, but also won him the Urban Council Fine Arts Award of the year.

Recently, the Hong Kong government has advocated creative industry actively. This inspired Lau’s interest in exploring the grey area between pure art and commercial design. In this April, he used thousands of distilled water bottles designed by himself, to make several giant chairs. This large-scale installation displayed at the Exhibition Hall of Hong Kong City Hall Low Block, best illustrates the unique artistic style of Lau, and it will be a milestone for Lau’s studies on pure art, applied art and commercial activities.

Apart from artistic creation, people and chair are also skillfully applied by Lau to other works of design. His poster “Patient—Bridge of Communication” of

1997 contains an image of piled up chairs that form a bridge of communication among people. Subsequently, people and chair have appeared time and again in his other artworks, such as in the poster series “People” that symbolizes man-and-society relationship and “Man. Woman Chair” that explores male and female relationship, with which Lau has succeeded in bringing out the message and beauty in a sensible manner.

Graphic design is a process of purposeful visual creation. Unlike fine art which is the realization of artist’s subjective personal vision, design needs to cater for some practical market and social needs. A successful piece of design, in addition to being artistic, has to convey clearly the artist’s idea and reflect the trend of the time. As Alastair Campbell says in the preface of *The New Designer’s Handbook 1995*:

“The main purpose of any design—and, hence, of any designer—is to communicate its intentions with clarity, flair, and aesthetic appeal.”

The artworks of Lau rightly reflect the secret and inner strength of being a successful designer. As an experienced designer, Lau never confines himself to any one kind of identities. He tried to explore another dimension between pure art and applied art so as to mix the elements of arts and business. It is hoped that the audience will be able to wander within the realm of Lau’s creativity at the exhibition and to feel the designer’s unique style found in his different media of creation.

人·椅 — 劉小康作品展 (2003)

林雪虹

優秀的藝術作品都擁有一些共同的特性 — 原創性、時代性和地域性。作為一位資深的設計師及藝術工作者，無論是平面設計或純藝術創作，劉小康均能展現其原創性及當時的社會時尚，並能以最佳的形式把事物的本質清晰地表現出來。

在這些共同的特性中，劉氏最注重的要算是原創性。他相信風格的開創者往往得到最多人的青睞，而拾人牙慧的模仿者，即使技巧非常精湛，也僅能在某些時空贏得一些讚賞，最終亦逃不過時間的淘汰。

在一九九四年的市政局戶外雕塑設計比賽中，劉氏便首次利用人型和椅子創作第一件大型的戶外雕塑「位置的尋求」，以表達當時香港人對地位追求的瘋狂。這件樹立在香港藝術館旁的公眾藝術作品，似在比喻藝術家在探求位置的過程中遇到種種的不安及困惑，但仍積極地尋找指向性的定位。

自此之後，劉氏繼續利用人和椅來創作一系列的作品，當中包括海報、裝置……等等，不但反映了當代社會的光怪陸離，亦顯示出劉氏的創作思維與

實際生活的微妙關係。事實上，作為一位土生土長，與時代脈搏相呼應的藝術工作者，他的作品總與香港社會息息相關。

九七前後香港經歷了政治上的巨大轉變，促使許多人去追求權位，而椅子正好是這個現象的表徵。九八年於香港藝穗會展出「位置的尋求 II」，劉氏便利用了殖民地政府常用的椅子來造成一道牆，不但反映了當時香港人面對傳統建制的複雜心情，亦為他贏取了當年的市政局藝術獎。

除了獨特的個人風格外，劉氏的作品亦具有一定的時代性與地域性。所謂時代性與地域性，就是指在同一時代或同一地域的作品，儘管彼此之間有一些表現上的差異，但還是具有一些普遍性的共通點，有別於其他時代或地區。劉氏的「人·椅」系列正好是香港回歸中國前後的社會寫照，亦反映出時代背景對藝術家的影響甚深。

近年香港政府積極提倡創意工業，亦引發劉氏對純藝術與商業設計之間那灰色地帶的好奇。在今年四月，劉氏將會用上千多個由他設計的蒸餾水瓶來製作數張巨型椅子。這組將放置在香港大會堂低座展覽廳展出的大型裝置，正是劉氏獨特風格的最佳寫照，亦是他探討純藝術、應用藝術與商業活動的互動關係的里程碑。

除了藝術創作外，人和椅亦被劉氏巧妙地運用在其他設計作品上。九七年的‘Patient — Bridge of Communication’海報裡重疊的椅子成為了人與人溝通的橋樑；其後人和椅子斷斷續續地出現在其他設計作品上，例如象徵人與社會關係的‘People’海報系列，探討兩性關係的「男·女」椅子……等等，劉氏都能理性地將訊息及美感展現出來。

平面設計是有目的的視覺創造。它與純藝術不同，後者為藝術家意念的主觀重現，前者須滿足一些實際的商業需求。一件成功的設計作品除了美觀外，還能夠清晰地傳達其意念及當時的風尚。正如阿拉斯脫爾·康貝爾 (Alastair Compbell) 在「新一代設計師手冊」(The New Designer’s Handbook 1995) 的序言中所言：

「任何設計 — 同時也是任何設計師 — 的主要目的，是用清晰的、有資質的和美學的表現來傳達他的意圖。」

劉氏的藝術作品正好反映他作為一位成功設計師的秘訣及內涵。而作為一位資深的設計師，劉氏卻又不以某類型的創作來界定自己的身分。在純藝術及應用藝術的關係上，劉氏嘗試開拓另類的創作空間，把藝術與商業巧妙地融合為一。期望觀眾在欣賞這展覽之餘，能同時漫遊於劉氏的創作意念中，感受設計師於不同創作媒體的獨特風格。

*A version of this essay was published as: "Chair: Works by Freeman Lau",
New Graphic (Issue 1), Nanjiang: Chinese Art Academy Publishing Company,
2003, 45.*