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On Globalization of Design: Locating Chinese Names in *Communication Arts Magazine*

Wendy Siuyi Wong, PhD
Department of Design
TEL4008, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON Canada M3J1P3
wsywong@yorku.ca

ABSTRACT

Globalization is one of today's hottest buzzwords. As globalization currently stands, the primary flow of influence is still mainly from European and North American countries to Asia and the rest of the world. Some cultural studies scholars are, however, optimistic about the emerging "Japanization of the West" (Befu, 2003), which may eventually balance Western dominance with widespread Asian influence. This paper focuses on visual communication design from the Greater China Region created over the past decade, when China's potential as a future world power became apparent. Samples for this study will be taken from design annuals of *Communication Arts* magazine dating from 1997 to 2006. Works published by designers with Chinese names, regardless of area, are located and evaluated to uncover the multiple cultural design identities, and globalization of modern design issues, in Chinese design and designers from locales including Hong Kong, China and Taiwan, as well as overseas Chinese.

KEYWORDS

Chinese graphic design studies, globalization, design identity

INTRODUCTION

Globalization is one of today's hottest buzzwords in all walks of life, with Theodore Levitt (1983) credited as the first to use the term in an economic context. Stuart Hall (1995) reminds us that today's globalization phenomenon is nothing new and can be traced back through the long history of Western imperialism, under which many people from non-Western countries experienced different degrees of colonization over the past few centuries.

Anthony Giddens (1999) sees globalization as the result of European nations using their military and economic power to conquer inferior countries in order to gain access to raw materials and secure new markets. Due to its historical origins, globalization was dominated

first by Europeans and later Americans. However, as “the emergence of new global communicational technologies has facilitated the questioning of the previously taken-for-granted Western cultural superiority” (Beynon & Dunkerley, 2000, p. 10), the stage of contemporary globalization that Held et al. (1999) visualize is becoming possible. Held et al. (1999) perceives that, for people in this period of contemporary globalization, it is “becoming increasingly impossible for them to live in that place disconnected culturally from the world” (cited by Beynon & Dunkerley, 2000, p. 10).

As globalization currently stands, the primary flow of influence is still mainly from European and North American countries to Asia and the rest of the world, although some cultural studies scholars are optimistic about the emerging “Japanization of the West” (Befu, 2003), which may eventually add balance to the current Western dominance.

Also, growing interest in China as a possible future world power is evident in the many current media reports about its economic potential. Globalization is “an outcome of capitalism in the modern period” (Beynon & Dunkerley, 2000, p. 4). Since China, like Japan, is apparently becoming another centre of globalization, it’s important to investigate the role design is playing in this process. Regardless of globalization’s origins, design is an important tool supporting the globalization process in economic, political, consumption and cultural spheres.

This paper focuses on visual communication design from the Greater China Region created over the past decade, when China’s potential as a future world power became apparent. Samples for this study will be taken from design annuals of *Communication Arts* magazine dating from 1997 to 2006. Among international visual communication trade journals, this California-based magazine is the clear choice, both because of its long history (founded in 1959) and its reputation in the field.

In this paper, works published in the design annuals of *Communication Arts* magazine by designers with Chinese names from any locale will be identified and evaluated, in order to uncover the multiple issues governing the flow of modern design and visual communication in the contemporary global context.

This paper will discuss the cultural identities of Chinese design and designers from different locales such as Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan, as well as overseas Chinese. What is the meaning of “Chinese” or being “Chinese” in a contemporary global context? Today Chinese is not defined solely by ethnicity. This paper challenges the widespread perception of self and others, and argues that globalization impacts the formation of identity, defined locally by self and globally by others. By locating Chinese designs in a world-established design trade journal, this study will help enable the future study and understanding of Chinese design identities.

ORIGIN OF MODERN DESIGN AND ITS CONTEXT IN EAST ASIA

Modern design is considered a Western import in an Asian context. Rajeshwan Ghose (1990), who organized one of the early design academic conferences, held in Hong Kong in 1989, comments that “the term ‘design’ does not have a natural equivalent or a directly translatable term in most of the Asian languages” (p.3). The word for design in Italian, “disegno,” appeared as early as the Renaissance period. Although the concept of design existed in ancient times in most Asian countries, the term “design” in the modern context of a profession appeared around the industrial revolution in England and Europe. The development of modern design in East Asia was picked up much later, arriving with imperialism and colonization by Western powers.

A Western-style fine art school was established in Japan by the Japanese government in November 1887 (Amagai, 2003), providing a very important design foundation for the development of modern design education in Japan. Due to the close Sino-Japanese interactions during this era, this Western-influenced Japanese education was acquired by Chinese students who studied in Japan in early 1900 (Yuan 2003, Kwok 2007).

The beginning of the flow of modern design from the West to the East can be seen as one of the results of imperialism and colonialism. The Shanghai style of the 1930s in China, illustrated in Scott Minick and Jiao Ping’s book *Chinese Graphic Design in the Twentieth Century*, made a significant contribution to the early development of modern design in China. During the 1930s, Shanghai design was very much in line with contemporary developments in Europe and the United States (Minick & Jiao 1990, Kwok 2007). Shanghai designers were inspired by Western design, particular Art Deco, which was admired for its “experimentation with geometric ornamentation, bold colours and strong patterns” (Minick and Jiao, 1990, p. 36). Design works produced in Shanghai during the 1930s reflect various foreign influences, due in large part to the existence of numerous foreign concession zones in the city, through which the customs and products of other countries entered local life.

The modern design direction that developed in Shanghai in the 1930s and was later picked up in Hong Kong after WWII is evident in the development of gongyi (a form of production, techniques and art skills). Chinese modernism came to entail a “fusion of indigenous fine and folk arts (Turner, 1995, p. 207), along with graphics and art styles borrowed from Europe and Japan. Modern design is not only an art style that appeared during a certain period of time, but also can be considered as a cultural production and consumption process of a location and culture.

How has the flow of cultural globalization occurred in the contemporary context? The well-established anthropologist, Harumi Befu (2003), sketches out the two routes that cultural globalization has taken based on the Japanese example. He states that the first route is through the “sojourner – emigrants, students, businessmen, and others” (p. 4), who leave their

homelands and settle somewhere else in the world. This circle of native carriers creates a network of global ethnoscapes, “as individuals necessarily take their culture with them” (p. 4). The second route is “the non-sojourner route, through which cultural products spread abroad without native carriers” (p. 4). He explains how “culture carried abroad by sojourners is then taken up by locals,” and “[h]uman dispersal is itself part of the globalization process, and the two processes are intricately intertwined, rather than empirically separate and distant” (p. 4). Thus, in order to complete studies of how cultural globalization proceeds, Befu emphasizes that “both routes need to be examined together” (p. 4).

Befu also provides us a model for understanding the spread of cultural products outside of American and European influence. In Befu’s first route of globalization, design education through educators or students plays an important role in understanding how principles and practices spread from the West to the East. The second route, the non-sojourner route, can be found in the international design magazines and annuals (mainly in the English language) circulating worldwide. Those design publications are a form of cultural product, promoting the “international standard” of design style, and can be considered as additional consumer commodities, as they are marketed and promoted like any other products.

Designers and readers all over the world both contribute to and consume design publications. Globalization is “an outcome of capitalism in the modern period” (Beynon & Dunkerley, 2000, p. 4), and design publications are certainly a key media which we can study. In this second route leading to the globalization of design, I am interested in seeing how the flow of modern design which originated in the West is currently presented in the East, particularly in the Chinese context. By locating design works by Chinese in a world-established design trade journal, this study will facilitate the understanding of modern design’s global development and construction.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

Communication Arts, a California-based magazine founded in 1959, is one of the oldest graphic design trade journals in the United States circulating worldwide. Because of the publication’s longevity and reputation in the field, this magazine was selected to be the source for sample works by designers with Chinese names; the designers can be from any country or region. Since China is apparently becoming another economic superpower and possibly another centre of globalization, it is important to investigate the role of design in this process. Also, after centuries of Chinese dispersion around the world, the definition of Chinese is no longer defined solely by ethnicity or language.

Barj Kachru, a scholar who studied the spread of English usage, suggested “three concentric circles” as a model representing the global use of the English language. The first

circle, “the inner circle,” refers to countries where English is the “first language,” like Britain, the USA, Australia, New Zealand and so on; the second, or “the outer circle,” applies to countries where English has the status of a “second language,” such as India and The Philippines; and, finally, the third circle is “the extending (or expanding) circle,” referring to countries where English has the status of a “foreign language” (quote from Bolton, 2000).

In this paper, I am borrowing Kachru’s concept of “three concentric circles” to define “Chinese” in a global context. My interpretation of the inner circle refers to countries and locales where any Chinese dialect (such as Mandarin, Cantonese, and Taiwanese) is the first spoken and written language; examples include China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau. The outer circle would represent countries where a majority of the population uses a Chinese dialect as their first language, such as Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. The extending circle, then, applies to countries where Chinese has the status of a “foreign language” and that have a visible ethnic community with Chinese origins. Examples of this extending circle are the USA, Canada, the UK and Europe.

Based on the above definitions of “Chinese,” the next step of this study is to look in *Communication Arts Design Annuals* for work by designers with Chinese names from areas representing the “three concentric circles.” The method used in this investigation is archival analysis. The purpose of this archival research is to locate appropriate records of historical information, collect a sample of those records, and then analyze the data to interpret their context and meaning. This study aims to identify images generated by Chinese designers or Chinese clients, in order to interpret modern design in global context as reflected in the selected world-established design trade journal, *Communication Arts*.

The sample selection is based on longitudinal sampling beginning with CA’s Design Annual 1997 and ending with Design Annual 2006. CA is a California-based magazine on visual communication which publishes eight issues a year and also five annuals on Design, Advertising, Illustration, Photography and Interactive Design. Design Annuals “feature 250 pages of the best work in posters, brochures, packaging, trademarks, corporate identity, annual reports, catalogs, letterheads and signage, and is fully indexed for reference” (CA 2007). These publications usually appear as November issues. CA estimates 70,000 copies of the Design Annual is distributed worldwide.

Every year a call for entries is announced with a mid-June deadline. All entries require an entry fee and all work is juried by a group of top design professionals. CA claims the Design and Advertising Annuals are “[t]he largest and most eminent of all juried competitions for graphic design” (CA 2007), receiving entries from 20 countries. In the 2006 Design Annual, only 249 pieces of work were accepted from 9,286 entries, making the Design Annual the most exclusive major graphic design competition in the world. The entries selected are considered the finest and most prestigious in the visual communication industry.

Considering the “three concentric circles”, a categorization system was made: 1) the inner circle: China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau; 2) the outer circle: Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand; and 3) the extending circle: the USA, Canada, UK and Europe.

SUMMARY OF THE DATA

The collected data represent 10 years of work by designers with Chinese names who represent modern design in one of the three concentric circles. Following is a table (table 1) summarizing the data collected. It shows the inclusion of Chinese designers by frequency in CA Design Annuals from 1996 to 2006.

Table 1: The frequency of entries by designers with Chinese names appearing in the Communication Arts Design Annuals from 1997 to 2006

Circle	Country	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Inner	Hong Kong	2	2	2	1	1	2	4	3	1	1
	China	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-
	Taiwan	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Outer	Singapore	-	-	-	2	4	2	2	-	5	3
	Malaysia	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Extending	USA	11	9	14	17	23	17	19	7	8	12
	Canada	-	2	3	2	2	3	1	1	-	-
	UK	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-
	Europe	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
	Others	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-
	Unknown	1	-	2	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Total		16	15	22	24	31	28	28	15	17	17

The above table represents the frequency of designers with Chinese names that appeared in the Communication Arts Design Annuals from 1996 to 2006. In the Inner Circle sample, Hong Kong had the most entries throughout that period. Singapore and Malaysia were the major countries in the Outer Circle region who were able to export design work of “international” quality to appear in the Annuals. In the Extending Circle category, entries from the USA are the majority while Canada and the UK have consistent entries throughout the years. Germany and the Netherlands are the two European countries with work appearing, and, for the Other countries, entries were selected from South Africa, Mexico and Mauritius.

DISCUSSION

Among the inner circle countries of Hong Kong, China and Taiwan, Hong Kong designers have the most entries, followed by China. Although the Shanghai Period in the 1930s represented the beginning of Chinese modern design in these three locales, it could not be sustained after

the 1940s. However, the Shanghai spirit of commercial graphic design continued under the capitalist economic system and British colonial rule in Hong Kong after WWII.

The level of talent and quality of creative production in Hong Kong prior to 1950 was no comparison to that of Shanghai. Design studies scholar Matthew Turner (1993) observes that Hong Kong designers were able to maintain the Shanghai's modern Chinese design style until the early 1960s. Hong Kong gained both human and financial resources from the change of regime in mainland China, for instance commercial artists who trained in Shanghai and Guangzhou before the Second World War.

The Shanghai modern Chinese style started to fade out as the society began developing at a faster pace, with increasing American influence on design and trade with America. Eventually, those local commercial artists were able to alter their style to serve the needs of the emerging Americanized commercial environment. Starting in the 1960s, the local design schools and institutions, armed with Western design theory and principles, became the major training field for new generations of designers. Relatively speaking, Hong Kong has a more international commercial environment compared to Taiwan and China, where designers have better opportunities to express their creative skills. However, this advantage is fading as the world's attention is drawn instead to the market of mainland China, where Shanghai and Beijing are becoming major competitors of Hong Kong.

Throughout the 1950s to 1970s, Hong Kong enjoyed political stability compared to mainland China and Taiwan. Due to the suppression of political control and restricted personal freedoms, design in Taiwan was less developed compared to Hong Kong during that period. However, after the martial law was released in 1987, most sectors of the society benefited from the policy, including graphic design activities. The Association of Taiwan Image Poster Designers (renamed the Chinese Poster Association in 1997) is an important example of improvement in the overall quality of design. The poster design activities that this Association organized even included an inter-regional event, with designers from Hong Kong and mainland China participating (Wong 2001).

Compared to Hong Kong and Taiwan, commercial arts were not even allowed to develop under the tight ideological control of the communist regime before the Open Door policy endorsed in late 1978. The development of commercial graphic arts was slow in the first two decades after the Open Door policy was instated. It was not until the early 1990s that designers in Shenzhen came under the influence of Hong Kong and Taiwanese designers, along with new commercial opportunities spawned by the rapid economic development emerging in mainland China. The Shenzhen Graphic Design Association was established in 1996 and was followed by the noteworthy Graphic Design in China Show held in Shenzhen four years ago (Wong 2001). Since the start of the new millennium, designers from China started receiving international awards, especially in the poster competitions. Poster design was the

first genre of graphic design picked up by mainland Chinese designers. Publication, corporate identity and advertising design began developing rapidly soon after.

With this historical background, it is easy to understand why Hong Kong designers are more adapted to Western graphic design practices, ranging from the major design visual expression language to design awards. Why did Hong Kong designers have the most entries accepted in the Communication Arts Design Annual from 1997 to 2006? It is not likely because all designers in Hong Kong are keen on submitting their work for design awards, but certainly some are keener than others. It is difficult to ascertain what percentage of designers entered their work to design awards and competitions; certainly more designers did not enter work to any events than those who did. The adjudication system in any design awards is complicated and represents the tastes and preferences of a particular group of jurors; it is beyond the parameters of this study. In this paper, I am interested in learning what kinds of work are being selected.

A wide range of work by Hong Kong designers appeared in the Communication Arts Design Annuals, including corporate identity, book design, editorial design, self-promotion, and poster design pieces; the submissions are a mixture of commercial and non-commercial work. Kan and Lau, Alan Chan, Tommy Li, Eric Chan, Michael Miller Yu, and Paul Lam are the individual designers/art directors/design firms from Hong Kong, and J. Walter Thompson and Token Workshop are two agency/design firms that appeared in the Communication Arts Design Annual from 1997 to 2006. Kan and Lau, Alan Chan, and Tommy Li are the three designers/art directors/design firms who received the most entries in the publication. Kan and Lau is the design firm of two partners, Kan Tai-keung and Freeman Lau, two of the most prestigious designers in Hong Kong. Kan Tai-keung's internationally known signature style is imparted with the touch of a Chinese painting brush stroke. Freeman Lau was once Kan's assistant and has since become his partner in the company. Although most of the Hong Kong designers whose works appear in the publication do have their own unique signature styles, not every piece included reflects that style due to the differing needs of the projects.

What is the relationship between the signature style of the designer and their commercial work? By examining the submissions by Alan Chan Design and Kan & Lau Design, we can see that the lead designers, Alan Chan and Kan Tai-keung, separated their personal signature styles and commercial work according to the nature of the projects. For example, in the corporate identity design of City's Super by Alan Chan Design (Issue #276, November 1997, page 68-69), the corporate identity of Fruito Ricci Restaurants (Issue #292, November 1999, page 92) by Kan and Lau Design Consultants, the lecture promotional poster by Alan Chan Design (issue #292, November 1999, page 194), and Kan Tai-keung's Art and Design Catalogue (issue #316, November 2002, page 175) by Kan and Lau Design Consultants, both the signature style and commercial work of Alan Chan and Kan Tai-keung are represented.

In Alan Chan Design's corporate identity piece for City's Super, the letter "i" was replaced with an exclamation mark in the word "City". The design of this corporate identity is clean and clever and evokes a company that you can find in the West. Although the store, City Super, is located in Hong Kong, it has no touch of the local flavor. In fact, it is an upscale supermarket targeted at wealthy consumers. On the contrary, in another example of a lecture promotional poster by Alan Chan for his guest lecture on Design and Lifestyle at Shenzhen University, the designer used Chinese written characters as an icon of a hand holding a pair of chopsticks. This work is heavily imbued with cultural suggestion, and yet can be easily communicated to the non-Chinese reading audience.

In Kan's case, although he is one of the art directors of Kan & Lau Design Consultants, the firm that created the corporate identity piece for Fuito Ricci Restaurants, that piece did not reflect the heavy Chinese flavor that we are used to seeing in Kan's and Lau's work. The design used is an icon of a man's head and uses bright colours. It has no sign of Kan's or Lau's customary elements, but might be a collaborative work together with the second art director, Eddy Yu. On the other hand, the piece from Kan & Lau Design's catalogue of Kan Tai-keung's exhibition at the Heritage Museum is 100% Kan's signature style. Kan's white background with Chinese fine art objects or brush strokes was shaped in the mid-1980s. Due to the nature of this particular project, an exhibit catalogue featuring Kan, who is both designer and Chinese painting artist, the style of this work is unmistakably Kan's.

Must a designer always include his or her own signature style and ethnic cultural elements in their designs? In the cases discussed above, we have an obvious conclusion that the design should first serve the nature of the project and the clients' needs, rather than the designers' own personal aesthetic interests. We can find similar design values in the work of Hong Kong designers; it is becoming rare to find the so-called "authentic" and "exotic" cultural elements in their work.

We can also find the same situation in the work by designers from Taiwan. The piece by JRV International with art director Van So, for client Yageo Corporation, appeared in the 1999 Design Annual with no trace of cultural elements of Taiwan, but rather a clean and chic international style (Issue #292, page 113).

In addition, the two posters by Chun-Liang Leo Lin, which appeared in 2002 (Issue #316, p. 32) and 2006 (Issue #348, p. 45), demonstrated how design considerations must follow from the nature of the project. These two poster designs are for non-commercial purposes and rely heavily on the coding of cultural elements. The theme of the poster that appeared in 2002 is Korean culture and, although the designer has a Taiwanese ethnic background, the piece has no trace of Taiwanese elements or style.

Few writings on the history of graphic design in Taiwan are available in the English language. Wen-huei Chou, a professor at Overseas Chinese Institute of Technology in Taiwan,

presented her studies in the history of design in Taiwan at the 2006 conference held by Temasek Design School in Singapore. She observes that “[i]f we trace back the design theory, design knowledge and design activity of Taiwan in the last thirty years, most are examples of ‘modernism design’ which were eager to follow in the lifestyle of the capitalistic metropolis and European civilization” (Chou 2006, p. 6). Indeed, just from the selected work from *Communication Arts Design Annuals*, we are not short of examples of good designs by inner circle designers, recognized by the “international” world for having the expected style or the “authenticity” found in matching the expected perceptions of “Chinese.”

Although designers from mainland China are the latest comers in the international scene compared to those from Hong Kong and Taiwan, the Western world is very interested to know anything about this potential economic giant. It is interesting to observe that the work of designers from China also has a “global” visual language that can communicate and meet with approval at the international level. Wang Xu is one of few Chinese designers to receive publicity in the Western design media. His works found in *Communication Arts Design Annuals* are mainly his publication design pieces from the *Design Exchange Magazine* and *Master Designers Book Series*. Unlike Kan Tai-keung and Alan Chan, Wang does not consciously uses Chinese elements in his work to establish a signature style. It is difficult to say why he has taken such an approach, whether it is due to the nature of the work or reflects his intent to construct an image of “modernism design” for the Chinese audience looking forward to a Western lifestyle. Wang is seen as an internationally successful designer among the new generation of designers in China (Wong, 2003), and doesn’t need to use the “authenticity” or “exotic” approach to attract the attention and recognition of the Western community.

The globalization of modern design in visual communication, from European and North American countries to Asia, is an ongoing process not yet able to develop into multiple and distinct cultural design identities. World design development is still dominated by European and North American countries, with Japanese designers also starting to play a major role in shaping the world’s “modernism design” landscape. Designers from Asian countries with different cultural settings or from an Asian ethnic background have difficulty asserting their own cultural touches without rational reason and justification for their choices. Modern design theory and principles are already well placed in the design education systems of many countries.

In analyzing the work assembled from the outer circle countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, it is difficult to identify the “cultural design identity” of the individual countries. Singapore has the highest design standard in this region, and designers from Singapore did pretty well, based on the number of submissions included in the Annuals. In 2001, Singapore had four pieces of work selected; it had five pieces chosen in 2005.

Singapore itself is a culturally diverse country, with Chinese as the majority ethnic group, and is positioned as an “international” city that is home to the head Asian offices of many

multinational companies. From a commercial perspective, designers in Singapore enjoy better overall business opportunities than Taiwanese designers.

Against this backdrop, along with the support that design policy receives from the Singapore government, it is not surprising to see outstanding design work coming from this tiny nation in Southeast Asia. A national design style, though, is not readily discerned by studying the pieces selected for the Annuals. However, the works do show cleanliness, tidiness, and wit in overall conceptual and visual design, along with resourcefulness in the use of production materials. Occasionally, you will encounter Chinese elements in the design work when it suits the nature of the project, but a unique national design style or Chinese cultural identity is not seen in these examples from Singapore.

What does “Chinese” or being “Chinese” mean in a contemporary global context? In the extending circle category, art directors/designers with Chinese names are mainly from major cities such as New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and Los Angeles in the United States, and Canada’s Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. After almost two centuries of Diaspora, people of Chinese ancestry can be found in many parts of the world. Overseas Chinese in North America are no longer restricted to a few professions such as railway laborer, mine worker, and laundry or grocery store owner. New generations of Chinese born outside China with little or no knowledge of Chinese cultures are creating a new landscape of “international Chinese” together with non-Chinese designers.

The works by art directors or designers with Chinese names included in the Annuals reveal no distinguishable difference in visual style. Like the examples found in the inner and outer circles, Chinese cultural elements are used when it is appropriate for the project. For example, Vivien Sung’s design for Chronicle Books’, titled *Five-fold Happiness*, appeared in Annual 2003 (Issue #324, p. 120), and illustrates the application of design theory to the editorial design of Chinese objects. The book design itself is clean and is laid out in a grid system; it represents the fundamental design system which is now in practice all over the world. Chinese elements in this book are found in the contents and the cultural product for selling and consumption. The meaning of “Chinese” in a contemporary global context may refer only to cultural products at the consumption level. Being “Chinese” can be only skin deep.

SUMMARY

This paper reviewed visual communication work published in *Communication Arts Design Annuals* by designers with Chinese names, regardless of area. It attempted to discuss and uncover the multiple cultural design identities, and globalization of modern design issues, in Chinese design and designers from locales including Hong Kong, China and Taiwan, as well as overseas Chinese. Based on the examples studied, we can conclude that the flow of modern

design that originated in the West is now well established in the East. However, it's difficult to draw any conclusions about multiple cultural design identities due to the lack of evidence shown in the samples collected.

What, if any, is the relationship between a designer's ethnic background and his or her design work? From the samples discussed above, we can see that Chinese cultural factors do not play a key role in every design project that Chinese designers undertake. It all depends on the nature of the design job. Chinese elements can be added if they are suitable for the project needs, and the use of Chinese elements is not exclusive to designers of Chinese descent. Likewise, designs created for Chinese clients do not need to use Chinese elements solely.

In an example published in Annual 2006, a Minneapolis-based design firm with a non-Chinese art director/designer came up with a design for a Chinese takeout restaurant client (Issue #348, page 7). This design used bright, contemporary colors as an alternative to typical Chinese takeout packaging, creating a fresh new look for Chinese restaurant packaging in the United States.

It is difficult to say how long it will take for globalization to eventually balance Western dominance with widespread Asian influence in the West. But, with the rising economic power of China and with the trends set by the emerging Japanese comics and animation cultures in the Western world (Wong 2006), it is optimistic that the future development of globalization will be a more balanced one. With cross-cultural communication becoming increasingly more common in everyday life and in design, this paper has brought up a number of potential issues to be discussed in future studies of the globalization of design, and also provides a starting point to explore the issues of visual multiculturalism from the international perspective.

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