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HOMA DESIGN MAGAZINE



Issue No. 3  
October 2023  
March 2024

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# Homa

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ph. Salva Lopez

## ‘Must haves’ for the living area

Soft, generous upholstered furniture and, surprisingly, cupboards, were among the undisputed stars of the living area at the latest Salone del Mobile in Milan, along with the most classic furnishing accessories, at least in the Western part of the continent.

The new generation of sofas and armchairs are proof that these products are still at the heart of the living area, designed to welcome and accommodate friends and family as well as letting you enjoy some private moments of comfort and relaxation. These objectives translate into padded, rounded and generous shapes, with sinuous and fluid curves conveying a feeling of extreme pleasure and comfort.

To meet the multiple needs of everyday life and let you to freely compose ever new shapes

within the living space, many systems are multifunctional, versatile and modular. The continuous experimentation to conquer space, together with the offer of modules, extensions and furnishing accessories such as ottomans and coffee tables, often integrated within the sofa, make for infinite variations that subvert the traditional layout.



### ARFLEX Tokio

The Tokio collection, designed by Claesson Koivisto Rune, features a series of rounded elements, and new curved seats, to which a backrest was added, all available in different depths versions. This provides for additional solutions to extend the sofas's layout in an open and inviting way. It can be large, curvy sofas or open-angle configurations with a soft, rounded design and generous proportions. These new elements allow for the creation of all imaginable combinations and let you create soft and architectural seating solutions.

[www.arflex.com](http://www.arflex.com)

### ARPER Ralik

The Ralik modular system, designed by Ichiro Iwasaki, is characterised by warm colours and soft, fluid lines. The seats and cushions can be combined in infinite ways, with a vast choice of benches, poufs and fixed or adjustable-height tables.

A distinctive feature of the Ralik collection, the L-shaped legs are made of recycled polypropylene, which makes cleaning easier in addition to giving the modules a sculptural effect.

Thanks to the quick assembly system, which does not require the use of any equipment, it is possible to combine six different seating modules into a variety of arrangements: poufs, seats with backrests and benches, all available in the two-seater or single version. The collection also includes soft cushions to combine with benches to ensure comfort in larger configurations.

[www.arper.com](http://www.arper.com)



ph. Salva Lopez



### CAPPELLINI Oblong Plus

Twenty years after it was first presented, the Oblong Plus series of upholstered furniture by Jasper Morrison continues to be an eminently contemporary product, the forerunner of the free, disarticulated seats that embodied the concept of relaxed comfort. Today Oblong's construction system has been revised to provide even greater comfort. A new life for a timeless classic.

[www.cappellini.com](http://www.cappellini.com)



**CASSINA**  
**Moncloud**

Bold lines and generous, welcoming volumes, as well as enticing and elegant aesthetics, characterise Moncloud, the new versatile system signed by Patricia Urquiola. A cozy and inviting retreat in which to live daily moments of sharing and conviviality. The wooden structure raises its padded shapes off the ground, giving it a pleasant lightness and a strong sense of softness, just like a cloud. The curved shapes of the padding are made of recycled PET fibres embracing the back and armrests like a wrap-around duvet. The soft cushions are also made of recycled PET.

[www.cassina.com](http://www.cassina.com)



**GERVASONI**  
**Samet**

Warm and inviting seating, arranged in gentle and well-organised forms, offer numerous unconventional layout options, including some of a more classic nature in the high version and others that are highly adaptable in the floor version, drawing even closer to the Thai-inspired vision crafted by Federica Biasi. Samet is a sofa that can be configured without constraints, serving as a multifunctional product that places individuals as active participants in shaping their living spaces, inspiring them to explore fresh usage patterns. The straightforward shapes are enhanced by intricate details, stitching, and matelassé, resulting in a timeless aesthetic.

[www.gervasoni1882.com](http://www.gervasoni1882.com)

**FLEXFORM**  
**Perry Up**

A stylish tubular metal base with die-cast aluminium feet supports a soft, minimalist structure with the seat and back cushions upholstered in soft goose down conveying a sense of comfort and welcoming hospitality. It is the Perry Up seating system designed by Antonio Citterio, which concept aims at combining top comfort with perfectly calibrated proportions and fine details. The variety of elements that form the seating system makes for the creation of linear configurations and modular solutions that can be declined in various sizes and finishes.

[www.flexform.it](http://www.flexform.it)



credits: Flexform

## Cupboards and chests, the new living room wildcards

They reimagine tradition and, in addition to preserving it, they now also take on the role of showcasing and furnishing other spaces outside the kitchen, including the living room and other open areas. We're talking about the latest cupboards and chests, which have evolved into genuine pieces of furniture. These versatile items can now find their place beyond the boundaries of the kitchen, thanks to their use of refined materials and finishes, striking forms, and distinctive designs.

**ARPER**  
**Semiton**

Designed by García Cumini, Semiton is a fully customisable and reconfigurable system that includes bases and shelves in two different lengths and three distinct modules coming in two different heights. These modules are available with options for doors, that can be either open or closed on one side. With its extensive customisation options, its exquisite finishes on both sides also make it suitable for placement against a wall or at the center of a room. Semiton effortlessly suits any setting, providing structure, surface, and space. The bases are made of aluminium, while the shelves are offered in an assortment of FSC certified wood veneers.

[www.arper.com](http://www.arper.com)



ph: Salva Lopez

**GALLOTTI & RADICE**  
**Cloud Infinity**

The Cloud Infinity designed by Castagna is the modular version of the Cloud sofa. The multiple seat modules available let you to create different configurations in shape and size. The upholstery is made of non-deformable polyurethane foam with differentiated density and polyester fibre, while the internal frame is made of wood. It can be combined with a coffee table in mud lacquered wood, also available with tops in different types of marble: natural brush Roman Travertine, Polished Gold Calacatta natural Vagli or brown, brushed Emperador.

[www.gallottiradice.it](http://www.gallottiradice.it)



**LA CIVIDINA**  
**Dorothea**

The Dorothea modular seating system blends natural inspiration with advanced modularity. Andrea Steidl drew inspiration from the similarly named "living stones" cactus. The planar and asymmetric seat is enveloped by a sculptural backrest, serving as the system's backbone. Thinning towards the centre and increasing in thickness at its ends, it cradles the padded elements, creating a welcoming interplay of gentle curves and defined volumes. These organic shapes, boasting generous proportions, are available in nine modules, including five seats and four backrests of varying sizes. These configurations encourage the creation of intricate and original compositions, transcending the traditional linear modularity.

[www.lacividina.com](http://www.lacividina.com)



**DRIADE**  
**Venus**

The Venus sideboard represents the extension of the homonymous bookcase designed by Fabio Novembre in 2017 and inspired by the wooden cases used by museums for the transport of statues. The statue reproduces Venus, the goddess of feminine beauty par excellence, the cupboard celebrates its mythical greatness and iconic character. Venus is made of natural oak with a sawn effect, while the sculpture is in white recomposed marble.

[www.driade.com](http://www.driade.com)

**KNOLL**  
**Womb Chair**

On the 75th anniversary of its design by Eero Saarinen, Knoll commemorates one of its most iconic creations: the Womb Chair. This armchair, commissioned by Florence Knoll, revolutionised the very notion of armchairs through techniques and technologies that were truly pioneering for its time. It not only bestowed upon it a unique form but also a functionality that defied categorisation. Florence Knoll herself described it as "an armchair that resembled a basket full of pillows, a soft sanctuary in which to nestle." The guiding principle behind the birth of the Womb Chair was the desire to satisfy our primal need for ultimate comfort—a concept proven to be universally timeless, transcending generations.

[www.knolleurope.com](http://www.knolleurope.com)



ph: Omar Sartor

**ZANOTTA**  
**Bumper**

The Bumper sofa is a soft sculpture meticulously crafted in polyurethane, with a strong focus on precision and the quality of the tailoring process, skilfully accentuating its curves. Its distinctive style is characterised by the arrangement of three overlapping comfort levels - the base, seat, and back - which extend seamlessly to the rear, making it an ideal choice for taking center stage in any room. The seat consists of a single, generously sized cushion, while the ample low back is integrated into the armrests and defines a gracefully curved profile that cradles, welcomes, and encourages moments of relaxation. Bumper is available in both single block and sectional versions, designed with various end modules, corners, extended armchairs, and poufs.

[www.zanotta.com](http://www.zanotta.com)



ph: Alberto Parise

**DE CASTELLI**  
**Ripple**

The Ripple cabinet, designed by Marco Pisati, combines the inspiration drawn from the fluidity and adaptability of water with the solidity of metal. The outcome is a curvy and versatile structure, an object meticulously sculpted and refined by the constant motion of waves.

It stands as a true sculpture, inviting admiration as one circumnavigates it, following the graceful contours that define its form, admiring the metallic curves shaped by De Castelli's expert craftsmanship and the gentle interplay of shadows across its surfaces.

This seemingly impenetrable cabinet, akin to a treasure chest, unveils two concealed storage compartments, cleverly concealed behind its hollow doors, engineered to open fully at 180 degrees.

[www.decastelli.com](http://www.decastelli.com)



**LAGO**  
**36e8**

The 36e8 cupboard modular series stands out for its contrasts in the use of materials and the captivating interplay of solid and void spaces, accentuated by the inclusion of refined and diverse materials. These include marble, XGlass metals, Wildwood wood, and coloured glass, which add a touch of luxury to the collection. Its remarkable versatility ensures that each piece of furniture is ideally suited for various settings, from the kitchen, to living room, to the entrance hall. Such flexibility is achieved through a full choice of personalised sizes and finishes.

[www.lago.it](http://www.lago.it)

**GLAS ITALIA**  
**Drift**

A solid volume that seems to float in a liquid, emerging partially. This is the hallmark of the new collection of storage furniture designed by Nendo. The particular effect is given by the insertion of a box in black oak wood with the function of sectioned storage compartment and fixed to the furniture, so that one part remains inside and the other resting on the top, made of extra-clear tempered frosted crystal whose doors slide inside profiles in natural anodized aluminium. The furniture is made of extra-clear tempered frosted crystal, glued to UV. The doors slide inside profiles in natural anodized aluminium.

The defining characteristic of Nendo's latest collection of storage furniture is the sight of a solid volume that appears to partially emerge as if floating in a liquid. This effect is achieved through the incorporation of a segmented storage compartment box in black oak wood, which is attached to the furniture. This design allows one part of the box to remain concealed inside while the other portion rests on the top surface. The unit itself is made of extra-clear, tempered frosted crystal, securely bonded with UV adhesive. The doors smoothly slide along the rails crafted from natural, anodised aluminium.

[www.glasitalia.com](http://www.glasitalia.com)



**RIVA 1920**  
**Revo High**

The tall solid wood and blockboard sideboard, named Revo and designed by Giuliano & Gabriele Cappelletti, stands out for its unique vertical treatment of the doors, known as Fresart, resulting in a contemporary and dynamic geometric pattern. The top features a framed design, while the shelves and drawers, featuring milled handles, are meticulously crafted using traditional dovetail joints.

[www.riva1920.it](http://www.riva1920.it)



# Trends China

Sustainability, personal care for body and mind, the wish to be able to enjoy one's own time, the aspiration for more social interaction and personalised objects as a way to express status are some of the current trends among Chinese consumers in the post-pandemic era.



## THE RITUAL... OF COFFEE

The desire to relax and enjoy one's free time in a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere fostered the growing popularity of coffee. It is enjoyed and served in different forms depending on the age group: slow and refined in sophisticated and elegant boutiques by the X generation, while the American version, revised and redesigned in a glocal way, is appreciated by the younger generations.



## THERE IS A WORLD ELSEWHERE

The reopening of borders marked the resumption of international travel, though its purpose has now changed: people travel not only to visit different cities and places of interest, but mostly to live new experiences, in particular communing with nature. Travel modes have evolved, too, and less time is dedicated to long term planning in favour of last minute organisation, without a precise itinerary in mind and in the company of friends.



## LIVE- STREAMING

Booming in 2020 with the pandemic, this phenomenon seems destined to remain, at least for the time being, as a relevant feature in the digital landscape. Driven by the online shopping event "Singles Day" by Alibaba in a dedicated section, Taobao Live, and held every November 11, the trend has grown during the pandemic thanks to the rise of so-called KOL (key opinion leaders, or influencers). The estimate is that in 2023 the livestreams will be able to move approximately 730 billion dollars of gross value in goods.



## NO GREENWASHING THANKS, ONLY REAL DEAL GREEN

The growing focus on sustainability and personal care, physical and mental, led to the strong rejection of any deceptive practice or strategy that might ultimately harm the environment or simply does not ensure maximum transparency. The utmost attention is paid to safe products made with natural ingredients. In particular, organic and sustainable ingredients are crucial in personal care products.



## FOCUS ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The pandemic made people more aware of the value of health. This increased awareness translated into a greater propensity to purchase healthcare products and services. There is a notable increase in the demand for health insurance policies, medical services and wellbeing products, from sports equipment to nutraceuticals reinforcing one's immune system.



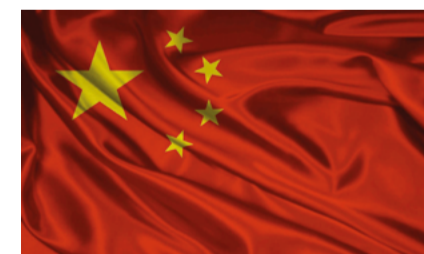
## BESPOKE FURNITURE

Functional needs and optimisation of spaces, but above all the evolution of the concept of home, increasingly intended as a means to express one's personality, ensure that there is a growing demand for custom, made-to-measure furniture items.



## A FASCINATION FOR ADVENTURE AND OUTDOOR LIVING

The increasing attention for health and wellbeing and the desire for social interaction after the period of isolation due to the prolonged lockdown made for a sudden collective passion for sports and outdoor activities. The Winter Olympics in Beijing and the popularity of Team China skier and Free Ski Big Air gold medalist Eileen Gu contributed to glamourise the sport, which joined other outdoor activities such as trekking and camping, including its luxury version "glamping", practised all year round, as part of China's new recreation favourites.



## I LOVE NATIONAL BRANDS

Consumers' preference for local brands is still strong and continue to be perceived as better and more technologically innovative than foreign brands.



## INSPIRED BY NATURE

Furniture materials, colours and shapes are inspired by the natural world, in the name of sustainability and environment protection, but above all for their ability to convey a relaxed atmosphere. A trend that merges with the 蘑菇状装饰 (Mógū zhuàngzhuāngshì) fad, literally 'Furniture shaped/ inspired by mushrooms' because it is believed that the colours and shapes of mushrooms, declined in the upholstery, lighting and ornaments, have a great soothing effect.



## MAKE WAY FOR THE NEW, VIRTUAL WEB-CELEBS!

It is estimated that in 2025 they will generate a turnover of 6.7 billion dollars compared to 870 million in 2021. They are the virtual influencers, the new celebrities entirely generated by artificial intelligence. They can autonomously live-stream, parade on the catwalk and pose next to products, especially in the fashion world. Their fan base is not as large as that of human influencers yet, but the popularity of these avatars is growing day by day.



## LET'S CONSUME, SUSTAINABLY

The issue of environmental sustainability is gaining growing attention and has a direct impact on consumption, in particular for younger generations, who are sensitive to the theme due to increased access to national education and sustainability-related content proposed by online KOL (Key Opinion Leaders).



## ECLECTICISM VS MINIMALIST LUXURY

An apparent paradox stands at the heart of Chinese homes: their peculiar eclectic style, in which Eastern and Western elements, the ancient and the modern, blend together in the name of extreme customisation against the refined, minimalist backdrop of neutral and natural colours.



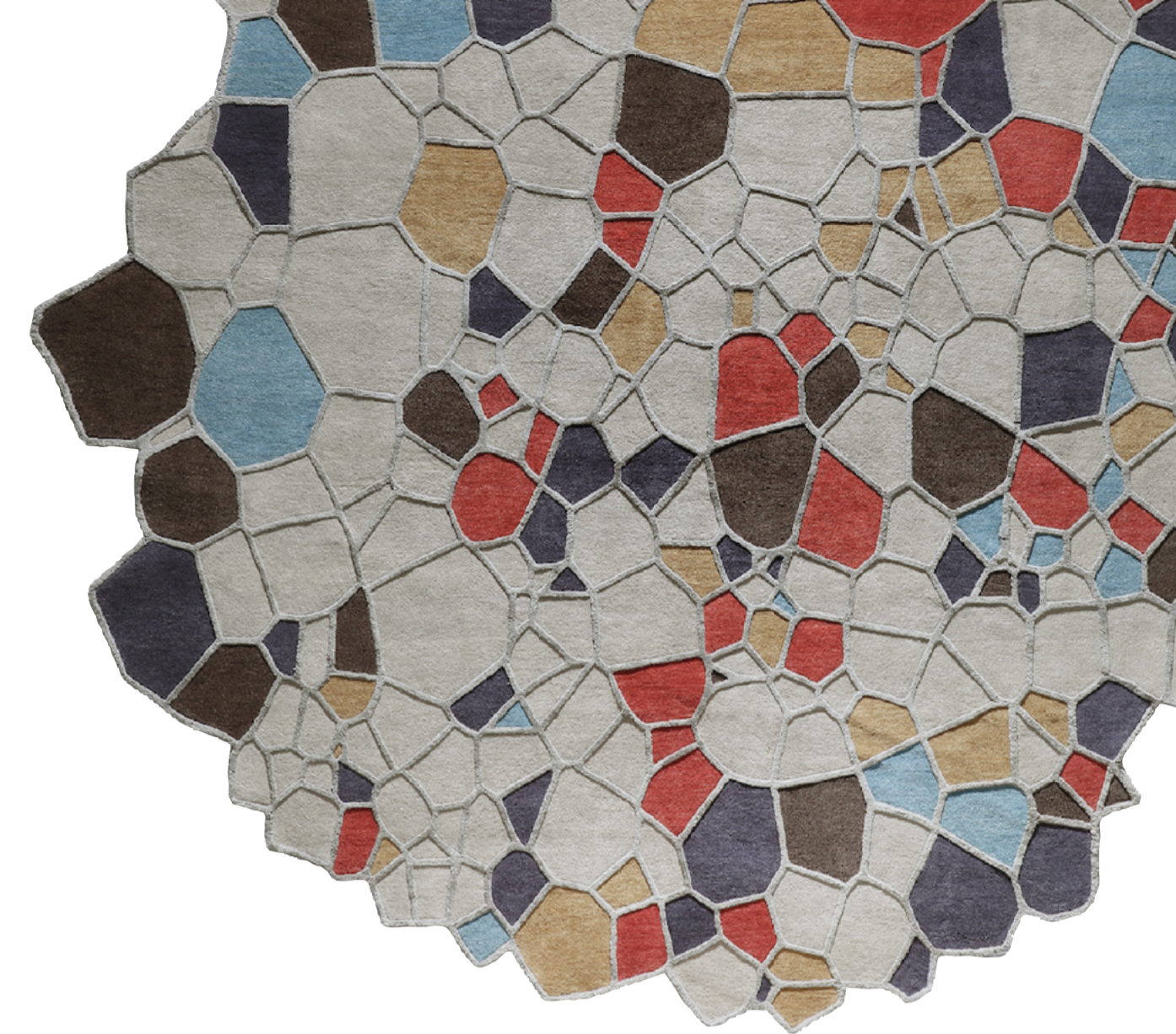
## THE METAVERSE, CHINESE EDITION

This year's major investments in artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and 6G technologies could set China as the metaverse's main hub. This is facilitated by consumers' particular interest in gaming.



# MICHAEL YOUNG: PIRATE DESIGN, BUT CORPORATE

A fascinating interview with British designer **MICHAEL YOUNG**, who spoke to DM from the breathtaking setting of his residence on the secluded, car-less island off Hong Kong he calls home, between a glass of Prosecco and the moving, vivid memories of long lost soul-brother and fellow designer James Irvine.



Young tells DM about the hard beginnings which shaped his character, his attraction for Asia and how he came to devote his attention to supporting young, talented designers, with the help of his many friends from around the world, through some visionary projects. "Pirate, but corporate", an expression he used during the interview, strikingly describes how he never wanted to create or impose a method, but rather privilege creativity, though never losing sight of the ultimate goal of design, that of serving Economy.

#### **What stands at the origin of your journey in Design, and what is the purpose of your creative activity?**

It starts off from a very basic beginning where, at school, I was dyslexic. I couldn't read, I couldn't write, so I failed everything. I guess ultimately I just had to find a way to make a living and my only release from education, from academia, was music and art, but I was never good at drawing, I was never good at fashion, nor at graphic design. I way I found of fundamentally making a living was "making things". Back in London, around 1988, I saw people like Ron Arad, Tom Dixon, Danny Lane, "making things". At the time, my concern was: "How am I gonna get through life?" I started to learn making things with my hands, so I had to learn about shapes and about the whole process of manufacturing. My origins are incredibly humble. I'm 57 this year, and back in the time Design didn't really exist outside of Memphis, which was the first thing I ever saw. I thought: "what are these guys doing, making these beautiful shapes and colours?" I didn't have a vision, it was the need for survival, for putting food on the table and trying to make something, which motivated me.

The Voronic rug for Christopher Farr, British makers and designers of contemporary finest rugs, is the perfect example of Young's concept of combining craftsmanship with advanced technology. The design was inspired by the Voronoi pattern, found in maths science and nature, for instance in the giraffe's skin.

"I'll throw something away very quickly once I've managed to understand how it's made and what I can do with it."

### How did your approach to design evolve over the years, if it did?

I guess it ultimately did, quite accidentally. At the time the Design industry was really small, everything was really transparent. There was a handful of journalists in the UK, and they started to like what I did and published it. Then I'd get a Conran shop saying "Hey, can we put this in the shop?" It was a really step-by-step process. I guess I learned by making things. I'd make a light and then I thought I could make a chair out of that light. There was no deep story, and it was a period in the UK scene which was very musical, with Blur, the Oasis, and there was this whole hip-hop movement in art, with Damien Hirst. I was kind of lucky that Design was empty then. There was a space for Design, and I just happened to be from that generation. The magazines and the media wanted to talk about it and galleries were starting to pop up around London. There was demand, it wasn't really like I tried to fuel it myself, it was a symbiotic relationship. Design was considered the poor man's art of creativity and of making a living, and it was hard!

### What does experimenting mean to you, and why is it important to experiment in design?

I think the roots of that come from looking at anything I could, as a broke designer trying to make a living. I wasn't born a visionary engineer, and it's really become part of my DNA to keep on evolving my way of living and my way of working by looking at things around me. It's not different today as it was 30 years ago, the world is just a lot easier to navigate for me now, just think of how



Round shapes and soft colours characterise MY's 2021 WIRED chair for La Manufacture. Made of steel wire in a matt finish, this chair evokes the forms and veins of a leaf and is a tribute to Harry Bertoina's iconic design.



One of Brionvega's legendary pieces, the celebrated 1961 TS207 portable radio by Rodolfo Bonetto, gets a new lease of life with MY's 2015 WEAR IT portable bluetooth speaker. It comes in a bright blue leather bag complete with straps.

technology has evolved tremendously since. But I get bored very easily of doing the same thing, I'll throw something away very quickly once I've managed to understand how it's made and what I can do with it. Hence I don't really work with a lot of mainstream companies. I don't want to. Don't get me wrong, it's very prestigious, but it's just not enough for me. I wanted to find out what was beyond the traditional techniques of manufacturing whereby I could explore my own universe. I'm a Hawking fan, and I put myself into space and explore it.

### What does it personally mean to be a designer of success?

When you suffer from dyslexia, you search deeper into other areas of your understanding, which is different from that of other people, to make sense of the world. I had very low self esteem, because people call you stupid, and when people call you stupid you've got to find a way to show them you're not stupid. I did that by exploring music, and colour, and fashion. It was like teaching a blind man colour for me to understand education and language. It taught me to be very sympathetic to people around me. It gave me a very grounded sense of equality. Design doesn't make you greater or bigger and we're all in this together. I got involved in a beautiful community very early on, supporting each other and sharing ideas. That has always driven me to keep on searching for new ideas, cross-pollinating different processes and methods just to keep driving myself forward.

### About Michael

Born in 1966 in Sunderland, in the North East of England, Michael Young started a career in design almost accidentally: affected by dyslexia, he experimented with different art forms to "get through life" before becoming fascinated by the work of designers such as Ron Arad and Tom Dixon. He graduated from Kingston University in 1992 and founded his own design studio. Considered a sophisticated minimalist, he quickly gained international recognition with his extraordinary, eclectic work. He moved to Hong Kong in 2006 and continued his experimental work with ever increasing, global success. Lately, among the many projects he is involved in around the world, Young has passionately engaged in giving younger-generation, talented designers new opportunities through the foundation of design didactic farms across China.

[michael-young.com](http://michael-young.com)







Michael Young with Demos Yu-bou Chiang, the Canadian and Taiwanese businessman who first invited him to Taipei 20 years ago. Chiang is the founder of popular design studio DEM Inc. and is also known for being the great-grandson of late Republic of China's president Chiang Kai-shek.

**You've been based in Honk Kong in the past 20 years. What attracted you to the Asian culture? How does it differ from Western design culture?**

We live in parallel universes, like Mac and PC. I don't think these two worlds will ever come together. My curiosity for Asia came very bizarrely when the great grandson of Chiang Kai-shek called me and said "I've been buying your furniture and I want you to come to Taiwan". So 20 year ago I went to Taipei. Those were also the early days of Foxconn, when we'd just discovered bluetooth, and rechargeable batteries, and I thought this was an insane opportunity. If I could apply my knowledge from the design industry in Europe and put it into technology, that would lead to a whole new way of living with objects in the home. That was my first entry point into Asia. I used to think that I was bringing a lot to China by being European, but they learn so fast. What they don't have is the same heritage. So the heritage that I've got from living in Clerkenwell, in a squat, and all I went through, is the one thing that you can't copy. Then I discovered how hard and fast people worked here. I discovered how industry was not about me and my ego. I went to the factory and I saw all these people trying to earn money to feed their families. It changed my perspective on things, it was about all these people not losing their jobs because of my ideas. Today with this new company we're opening in China, I'm setting myself up as a brand rather than as a designer, not because of me, but to make something all these people working around me can survive off when I'm gone. We're all working hard to make this universe work. It's exciting, because everybody's got their position within this entity we've created in Shenzhen, and it's huge. It's nothing I expected ever to happen in my life.

**What have you retained from Western design culture?**

Of course I miss Western culture, on a daily basis. I miss Italy tremendously, everybody having such a great life with all the food, the wine, the landscapes. I do go to Tuscany a lot, I love it, and I love the fact that it's a culture where you can be present in your everyday life. In China you can't. Everything is moving so fast. I miss just going to the pub and reading the newspaper... That's all I wanted to do in life: going to the pub and reading the newspaper with a pint. I was brought up in Sunderland, and you were taught that when you left school, you would go to work, and then at 5 o'clock the pub would open, and you would go to the pub

2007 City Storm, for Taiwan based GIANT, the largest bicycle manufacturer in the world, is a sleek, modern interpretation of the classic city bike. It was inspired by non-sportsmen, everyday riders and received the Red Dot Design award.



and have five pints of lager, and then you would go home. At 15 years old that was my understanding of the world.

**How do you reconcile product innovation and technology on one hand, and craftsmanship on the other hand?**

There are some things I just don't know about what I do, but a lot of technology is actually quite craft-based. Carbon-fibre is a craft and it's considered higher level technology. The method behind it is actually rather hands-on. I'm quite emotional when I meet the clients, and if I can look them in the eyes and sense their soul, they can guide me. It's a very important part of beginning the process of working together. I guess I try and understand exactly how things are made and why they are made, the impact they have and the people who are making them. It's quite an emotional journey. I simplify every piece of information they give me, I'm not trying to design an aircraft, I can't process the information.

**Is such extreme design experimentation possible/ replicable outside Hong Kong? What can you do in China, in terms of design, that you cannot do in the rest of the world?**

Everything we do that is experimental, we create ourselves. We work with a lot of factories, like WeNext in China, who can do anything we want by 3D printing. What's intriguing in China is that people do not say "no", regardless of whether something can or cannot be done. I'm setting up my own eyewear brand in China. I can go back to carving for the frame, for instance, with incredible amount of detail, since they still have the skill to do that, and I can transfer this handcraft to tech materials such as carbon-fibre or acetate. This cross-pollination is what creates innovation. We could 3D-print everything but we'd rather use the guys who do the real deal. This is where the opportunity exists. I've just been to Japan where we're working on this project, called Craft x Tech, with this company who has been making cast-iron teapots for eight hundred years. We've been experimenting with 3D printed surfaces, combining them with their traditional cast-iron



This tableware collection is the product of the collaboration between Michael Young Studio and Chinese homeware brand Zens. The project aims at promoting local products such as bamboo and create cultural and ecologically responsible products.



The STICKLIGHT outdoor light was first produced in 1997 by Tom Dixon's Eurolounge and was inspired by the observation of roadworks lights. Since then several different versions have been produced, in size, colour and lighting type.

a designer, you have accountability for industry." I learned a lot of lessons from important friends, so I decided early on that my purpose was to create economy for companies, yet I don't want to design two hundred versions of the same chair, eventually one runs out of space! I want to design one chair, and then move on. I just want to keep on moving, to survive by staying on the front of the bus. If I can do that, that's inspiring, enough to wake up in the morning.

**Your portfolio spans over a wide range of products and industries. Is there a particular product category or industry that fascinates or inspires you more than others? If yes, why?**

I've been down so many rabbit holes within industry. There's quite a few projects that I actually adore, like the stick light I did with Tom Dixon. It was the first time I did something in plastic in London. Also, things like the dog house I did for Magis, which is not a commercial product. That came out of having a glass of Prosecco in Treviso with Mr Perazza (Eugenio Perazza, founder of Magis, Ed.) and it was the most insane thing. We got the sketch book out over lunch, eating fish. The design came together and I finally realised that I had some understanding of form in a complex matrix. I later applied that learning from Magis to Giant bicycles. I think of anything, my childhood dream came together with the Mini-Moke project. I've always loved the Mini-Moke. When I was 12 I used to think it was a fun thing, and actually we've helped getting it back into production. We've redesigned it, and I still own the IP on it. We did it in the simplest way, that honoured the original designer. Getting this British icon back onto the market is probably what I'm most proud of in my life.

process. We'll soon be having a teapot exhibition! I guess it's just this to and fro, the carbon-fibre factory, a guy carving monkeys in Mongolia or someone doing cloisonné (an ancient metalwork decorative technique, Ed.). We have it all here. When I go back to the UK, it vanishes, and that makes me really sad. But we are manufacturing the Mini Moke again in the UK, and that's comforting!

**What makes you click in accepting a new design project? What does it need to have in order to inspire you?**

I guess I would need to believe it's not already on the market. Also it would need to have a sense of purpose. Despite this dyslexic/artist's part of my brain, I still have some commercial reason, so I believe Design is for Economy. James Irvine, who was a very good friend of mine, always said to me, when I left college: "Michael, you need to decide if you're an artist or a designer, for if you're



The DOG HOUSE was conceived over one epic fish lunch with MAGIS owner and founder Eugenio Perazza in 2001 somewhere near Venice. It is made of polyethylene and is mounted on a steel frame. It comes with matching steps and a brass plate that reads AMICUS FIDELIS protectio fortis, Latin for "Faithful Friend, strong protection



**What's on the horizon for you?**

What I started doing to make a living was working at Tom Dixon's, and welding and selling stuff to the Conran shop, never left my heart. So now I've been working on my own home furniture collection for two years, purely for the Chinese market. We launched it in Design Shanghai to see what would happen. The response was incredible, hence we're going to open around 12 Michael Young stores around China with that collection. Together with our business partner, our commercial manager for China, we decided to call them "Michael Young Museums". It might sound a bit arrogant, but the reason for that is that I want to use them as a vehicle to have my own collection and invite all the companies I'm working with around the world to put things into the space in an easy environment, so everyone can get involved. What I realised was that everything I do should be part of a home. We will open the first ones this year in Shanghai. We will open the first base-camp in Shenzhen in three weeks time. I transported my studio from Belgium to Shenzhen to create a didactic environment for young designers. I will bring lots of other people and try and cross-over with other designers from around the world. We'll educate a lot of the young designers here. We'll do workshops, we're going to open a bar. The first one will be open by the end of the month, then we'll start spinning out around China. The good thing about China is that it's a scalable country. It's a crazy opportunity, I can bring the whole universe I've been existing in to China. I'm not into establishing a process about the way we work, I want it to be intuitive. It's a lot more pirate, but it's corporate. We want to bring all the people we know in that global community together.

The Moke is possibly one of the projects Young is prouder of. Moke international asked for his help to bring back the cult beach buggy 60 years after it first appeared. Enhanced breaks and suspensions and improved road holding now characterise the new 2013 Moke, while the looks and the spirit have been entirely respected.

"I transported my studio from Belgium to Shenzhen to create a didactic environment for young designers."

# Lidan Liu: putting design on the boardroom map

A designer, an academic and an entrepreneur, Lidan Liu is determined to give Design the place and role it deserves in our societies, in our cultures and in our everyday lives.

The multifaceted Design advocate explores every possible path on that journey, starting by rocking the stiff, dusty global corporate culture and giving back consumers a taste for experimenting and enjoying their passions to the fullest.

In today's China, Design is beginning to emerge as the driving force of innovation and the way forward for the formidable economy of the country, indicating that industrial might alone may not be sufficient to address the challenges of our globalised society. Among those who first embraced the idea, Lidan Liu is a passionate advocate of design as an important tool of corporate strategy and a prominent member of the jury of some of the most important international design awards, among which the prestigious iF Design Award.

## What is the relevance of Product Design, in the broader meaning of the term, in China nowadays

As you say, Product Design has a very broad definition, and doesn't only refer to physical objects alone but also to services and other intangible goods, and in China this definition is possibly even broader. In the past ten years, the world of digital and the internet have had a strong influence on Design in China. More recently, there has been a notable shift of talents from Industrial Design (ID), dealing with the design of physical products, to User Experience (UX) design due to the booming growth of the Mobile Web and Web3 development. However, because of the emergence of transformative trends, such as artificial intelligence aided tools in design, this represents both a challenge and a significant opportunity for designers to evolve. These changes are eagerly anticipated for the transformative impact they could bring to the realm of designer talents. In either case, the current landscape in the country further stresses the remarkable competitive advantage enjoyed by top Chinese brands that prioritise exemplary design, especially in the context of international exports. Therefore many companies are investing in recruiting design talents to enhance their product design, and branding alike.

## Have Product and Customer Experience Design become strategic tools for China's businesses today?

The whole industry in China has greatly evolved, with the focus shifting from a merely competitive and price perspective to User Experience. A tell-tale sign of this new age in China is the rise of Design Vice Presidents (VPs), a phenomenon spanning even startup ventures where founders often possess a design background. The infusion of a corporate-level design culture is pivotal in fostering tangible design outcomes. Furthermore, the proliferation of emerging startups founded by designers is a noteworthy phenomenon. As China progressively moves beyond competing solely on cost-efficiency and manufacturing prowess, design stands as a paramount driver in ascending the global market hierarchy.

## How do Chinese consumers perceive Product Design? Is it important to them?

Against the backdrop of fierce competition within the Chinese market, consumers have transcended mere expectations of quality and pricing. In their decision-making, Product Design has emerged as a critical differentiating factor. This shift is accentuated by the contemporary generation of Chinese consumers, characterised by a profound alignment with personal style preferences. Consequently, they gravitate towards brands that seamlessly resonate with their individual identities.

## How can design help Chinese brands stand out on the global and indeed domestic markets?

The profound impact of design on branding is best exemplified by the cultivation of a distinctive brand character that resonates with a global audience. While every brand character possesses inherent strengths and limitations, it is this uniqueness that sets brands

## ABOUT HOTO

HOTO, short for home tools, was founded in 2016 by designer and entrepreneur Lidan Liu. Her goal was to bring cool tech design to otherwise uninspiring utility products. In less than 10 years, HOTO succeeded in bringing sleek modern elegance to the world of DIY and home improvement, without compromising on functionality and performance. It now sells in 56 countries worldwide and its popularity is steadily growing. In the process, the brand gathered more than 40 international design awards, including the iF Design Award. In 2023, the HOTO toolbox series won "Best of the Best" at the Red Dot Awards.

[www.hototools.com](http://www.hototools.com)

  
reddot winner 2023  
HOTO Golf Rangefinder



HOTO 12V Brushless Drill



apart. Design plays a fundamental role in evoking robust emotional connections, thereby imbuing each customer with a deeply personal sense of value. An excellent example of effective design is DJI, the immensely successful Shenzhen-based drone company that controls a whopping 75% share of the global drone market. DJI's accomplishments demonstrate how design can effectively highlight technological expertise while also establishing a unique brand identity and personality. Naturally, competitive industries like consumer electronics, automotive, and lifestyle products were quick to recognize the potential of design and adopted it early on. Effective design is also crucial for communication tools like the social media app WeChat, which relies on UI/UX design to optimize the user experience and has gained a significant following in China.

**How can it help Chinese companies be more competitive?**

Undoubtedly, Design has proven instrumental in enhancing the image of companies, exemplified by the paradigm set by DJI. Harnessing China's exceptional prototyping capabilities and design prowess, products with impeccable design aesthetics offer customers an enriching journey from purchase to utilisation. This symbiotic relationship between design and quality bolsters the competitive edge of Chinese firms on the global stage.

**As a member of the jury of the most important design award, the iF, and a professor of Design, what contribution do you feel you can personally offer to support the creation of a Product Design culture in China?**

As a person I don't think I can influence Chinese Design culture that much, though I do my best to contribute. My aspiration to make a meaningful impact in fostering a vibrant design culture aligns with the broader Chinese economy and society. While acknowledging the magnitude of this endeavour, my role entails both setting a precedent of revolutionary design and guiding the next generation of designers. My affiliation with the School of Design and Innovation at Tongji University empowers me to directly influence emerging designers, nurturing their acumen of raising critical questions to inspire new ideas for solutions towards multiple topics, such as, impact of newest technologies, and the meaning of sustainability. Tongji University provides a dynamic platform for the exchange of diverse perspectives, also thanks to the collaboration with foreign universities such as Milan's Polytechnic, providing for an inspiring environment that opens up the unlimited potential inherent in open discussions.

**Scandinavian, Italian, German or European Design all have clearly recognisable, distinctive identities. Is there such a thing as a typical Chinese design-identity?**

Actually have a strong opinion about this. I don't see it happening in China, and I don't think it's necessary at this point. Everything is still so young, and exciting, it's too soon. The Western world has undergone a century-long evolution in design development, the trajectory of trends and identities is emblematic of historical contexts and represents a summary of past events. China has undergone a journey in design over the past three decades. At present, China's design scene is characterised by multifaceted growth and exploration. Over time, as China matures within the design domain, a distinct and powerful design identity will emerge organically, naturally. I advocate an approach that embraces innovative ideas, potential, and opportunities over rigid definitions of "distinctive identity."

“China’s design scene is characterised by multifaceted growth and exploration.”



reddot winner 2023  
HOTO Rotary Tool Kit



DESIGN AWARD 2022  
HOTO Toolbox Series

**As the founder and CEO of HOTO (Home Tools, Ed.), your declared intent was to bring sleek modern design to everyday, mundane home tools. What motivated and inspired you when embarking on such a venture, and how did it turn out?**

As a designer, I often found that in large organisations, all the important choices regarding design were taken by the companies' executives and decision makers. I wanted to create something where all aspects of a product, from its actual shape to the way it was marketed, to the customer experience, were driven by design. So the impetus behind HOTO's establishment was rooted in advocating the pivotal role of design within corporate frameworks. China's fertile landscape for new and innovative design, coupled with burgeoning platforms to incubate ideas, were a clear sign that this was the right moment to embark on this journey. The outcome has been resounding success. HOTO has successfully introduced over 30 products, built a team of 120+ individuals, and achieved remarkable sales figures, with our flagship product, the precision screwdriver tool set, exceeding the 3 million unit mark within 2.5 years.

**What are your plans for HOTO in the near future? Where do you want to take the brand, and what is your vision for it in the long-term?**

Our payoff is "make it happen"! We want to inspire people to embark on personal journeys of exploration, be it hobbies, projects, or self development. HOTO's trajectory is hence firmly anchored to a customer-centric paradigm. Our strategic focus entails crafting tools and products that go beyond their utilitarian functions. Also envisioning a global footprint, HOTO seeks to be regarded as a beacon of inspiration, a catalyst for individuals to embrace new pursuits.

**Would you like to share more insights about your next moves on a professional and personal level?**

Professionally, starting from the idea that design can be close to the user while providing for smooth and smart manufacturing, my vision is to contribute building a smarter Supply Chain: I'm working towards creating a system that brings together supply and demand in a flexible way, enhancing the efficiency of producing top-notch products. This way, we can deliver even better offerings to our customers. I also want to foster Innovation: I'm passionate about providing a platform where creative minds can come together to share and bring their ideas to life. It's all about turning those innovative concepts into real, tangible products that can make a difference. Finally, still on a professional level, one of my goals is to strengthen our designer Community: at HOTO, we're looking to attract even more talented designers to join our community. By doing so, we can collectively push the boundaries of what's possible and keep our designs at the cutting edge.

On a personal level I profoundly enjoy connecting with Visionaries: I'm really looking forward to meeting with people from all corners of the world who share a common vision for the future. It's incredibly exciting to collaborate with individuals who have a forward-looking perspective and want to make a positive impact. I'm also all about dreaming big. I'm eager to explore new horizons and work towards building a future that aligns with the ever-evolving global landscape. There's so much potential waiting to be harnessed, and I'm excited to be a part of that journey.



DESIGN AWARD 2023  
HOTO Camping light

reddot winner 2023  
best of the best  
HOTO 3.6V Electric Screwdriver Toolbox



**Lidan Liu**  
The recipient of more than one hundred design awards, including the Good Design Award, IDEA and the Red Dot Design Award, Lidan Liu founded HOTO "Home Tools" technology, in 2016, of which she is CEO. A partner at designaffairs China from 2010 to 2018, she is also associate professor of the College of Design and Innovation at Tongji University, and a respected juror of many different design juries, such as the Braun Prize and the iF design award.

# Sheng-Hung Lee Designing tomorrow's society



An enlightening interview with M.I.T. Ph.D. researcher and system and service designer Sheng-Hung, who conceives Design as a tool for social justice, and fairer communities, in societies where consumption is purposeful and longevity part of the equation.

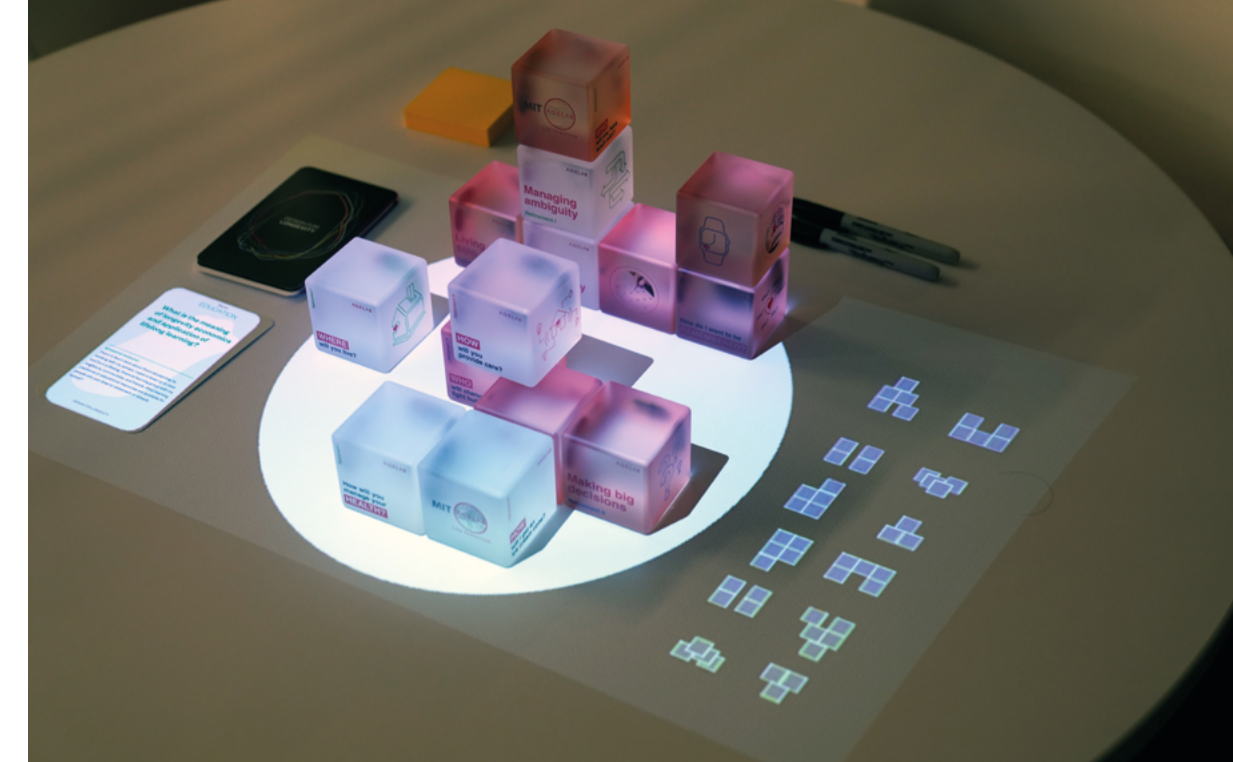
**Looking at your impressive background and track record, it's hard to sum you up in one particular design approach. How would you personally define your design philosophy?**

Everyone's design philosophy evolves at different stages of their lives. I was trained as a hard-core product designer and an electric engineer. My approach was very functional, very purposeful-driven. I had to solve problems, make things function. Only when I joined IDEO (one of the world's most influential design companies, Ed.), I learned about human-centred design. Now at M.I.T. I mainly focus on system design. We still need to understand people, and have empathy, but at the same time we have to think about how we can scale the impact of what we design, in terms of systems.

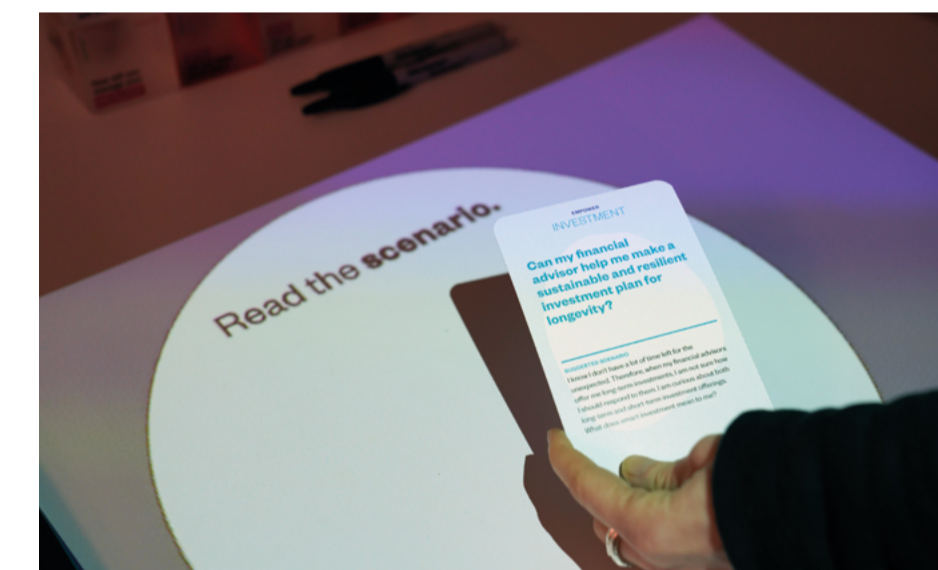
**As a scholar of Human Behaviour, how does the study of our societies' lifestyles, especially in increasingly**

**long-living populations, influence your approach to design?**

Indeed my research now really focusses on design for longevity, shifting from the original idea of "designing for retirement": people live longer and want to better their quality of life, and live healthier, not just financially. We want to understand how we can achieve this as a system, what strategic investments need to be made. Rather than simply considering age, we'd rather look at the question in terms of different stages of life. Everyone has different stages in their own lives. How does that reflect on our design process? Retirement is somehow a fake concept. People still continue to live and have some purpose. We still want to achieve things and have some sort of fulfilment. Also, how do we address a multigenerational culture and society? These are the questions designers need to face. Today in Japan, for instance, a 75 year-old working in a convenience



Retirement is a fake concept, people continue to live and have purpose



USING VERY PHYSICAL OBJECTS SUCH AS CUBES, CARDS AND POST-IT NOTES CAN HELP THE SIMULATION OF INTANGIBLE CONCEPTS AND PROCESSES, AS IN THIS BOARD GAME CREATED BY M.I.T.'S AGELAB, DR. JOSEPH F. COUGHLIN, AND SOFIE HODARA





MOBILITY IS A CRITICAL FACTOR OF INDEPENDENCE FOR OLDER ADULTS: INDOOR FOOTWEAR IS POSSIBLY THE PRODUCT THAT IS MOST DIRECTLY CONNECTED TO THEIR WALKING BEHAVIOUR, AND CAN PREVENT THEM FROM FALLING AT HOME.

store is a pretty common sight. Another important issue is “ageism” (discrimination against older people, Ed.), how can we erase it? Are our fundamental societal infrastructures ready for this multi-generational culture? These issues now stand at the top of my design philosophy.

**What difference do these considerations make when designing a new product for the world market?**

I was trained as a design practitioner, and I like to make things tangible. Thinking about design for longevity, how do you project your future self? Hands-on, tangible experiences can enable people to express themselves, since we’re talking about abstract concepts, such as retirement, family, trust. So we try and make the conversation easier to navigate. We did this experiment with a mother and her daughter, and asked about their financial planning. The first thing is that they didn’t want to talk about it. That’s normal, it’s too private, too personal, and too sensitive. Then we decided to transform the conversation into playing a game using physical objects, such as cubes, to make it very concrete. They started to open up with me. So the mother started using these cubes to talk about her financial planning and philosophy, the daughter wanted to be part of the conversation. I’m originally from Taiwan, and my very traditional Chinese parents never talk about money. So you don’t know how they invest for their future, but also you don’t know how they can influence my generation, nor how I can teach the next generation. This is an interesting generation gap and cultural difference. Tangibility is a way to address all the different challenges and possibilities.

**How can we, as a society, live longer and be sustainable?**

Sustainability is a bit of a buzzword. It’s very trendy and everybody is talking about it, but we really need to change the fundamentals. For instance, we’ve just had coffee, using this paper cup. We would tend to think

**About Sheng-Hung Lee**

Sheng-Hung Lee Was Born In Taiwan In 1987. He Graduated In Electrical Engineering and Industrial Design at the National Cheng Kung University of Taiwan In 2013. Sheng Went on to earn a Masters Degree, then a Phd from Massachusetts Institute Of Technology at Cambridge, where he is currently working and conducting research on the impact of design on technology on society. Prior to that he was an Adjunct Professor at Shih Chien University in Taiwan and Fudan University in China. As an Industrial Designer he has worked with IDEO and Continuum. He is a member of the jury of the most prestigious design awards in the world and has won innumerable awards himself, along with countless accolades and acknowledgements.

[shenghunglee.com](http://shenghunglee.com)



it’s recyclable since it’s made out of paper, but in fact it’s not because it’s been contaminated by the coffee. So we really need to change the way we think and act about it. Despite all the greenwash, our behaviour hasn’t changed. When designing any product, we should really have in mind people’s intentions and behaviours about it.

**What is the role of care and finance in designing tomorrow’s society?**

When talking about older adults, that of the caregiver seems to be a second tier role in today’s society. Our task is to design a system, a community where both the giver and the recipient receive better and fair consideration. In the US, the quality of care you receive as an elderly citizen depends on your income, while in other cultures and societies, like in Europe, or indeed Asia, governments play a more important role in protecting these weaker categories and guarantee access to care and support. As designers, we talk about “Design Justice” with a specific reference to social justice. How do we design an equitable system? This is a really important issue. Fundamentally, we need to change our mindset and our behaviour.

**What about the starter-ups in life?**

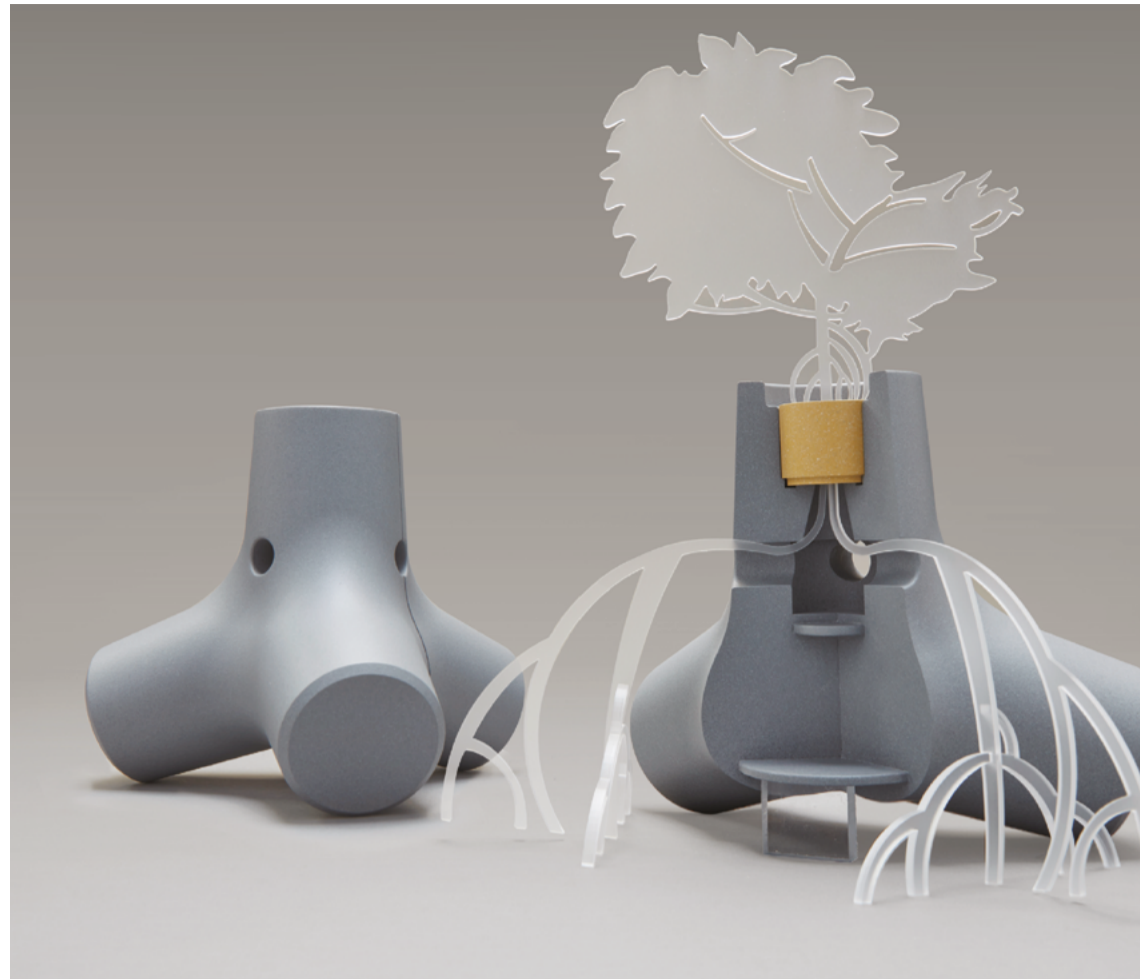
The focus here should be on financial literacy. At school you’re never taught how to manage your personal finances, how to invest, how to think about your future. Younger people generally tend to think that it’s too far away for them to worry about. People start to think about it when it’s already a bit late. Buying a car, or a home, need planning well in advance. With this project we want to talk to younger people about financial planning. I once had this interview with a service designer at Phillips. She was in her 40s, and for 30 years her dad had been her financial advisor. Now he wasn’t enough any more and she would turn to AI for online advice, but didn’t really trust it, and she didn’t have the resources for a professional advisor. We want to bridge that gap.

We’re too convenient, we’ve lost the essence of what we really need, because we purchase for the sake of purchasing





THE TETRAPOT IS A CONCRETE SEA DEFENCE HOLLOW ELEMENT CONTAINING MANGROVE AND OTHER PLANTS SEEDS, WITH THE AIM TO COMBAT THE DEFORESTATION OF COASTLINES.



"SMALL THINGS WITH A BIG HEART", A COLLECTION OF SIMPLE, MUNDANE YET SMART OBJECTS THAT MAKE EVERYDAY LIFE EASIER, AS A CONCRETE EXAMPLE OF THE IDA THAT THE BEST DESIGN IS NON-DESIGN.



### What's your take on the evolution of household appliance design?

In the past, there was a lot of talking about IoT products. Data would get collected in order to understand users' preferences, so the privacy issue arose. On one hand we wanted the product to have our data in order to become smarter, but on the other hand we didn't want to share our data. Nowadays most appliances and consumer electronics companies talk about "platforms" whereby different products would connect with each other. Take my iPhone, it connects with my watch, and my tablet, and my laptop. But my GoPro camera doesn't connect with my android phone. I'd need to download an app for that. If you own the platform, you might own the market. It's not about single components or products. The future will be about integration.

### What is, in your opinion, the importance of tradition and well-being in society's current trends?

To simplify, let's divide our societies into Eastern and Western: the approach to health, and well-being in general, is a lot more holistic in Eastern cultures. If I have a headache, according to traditional medicine in China or Taiwan, it might not have to do with something specific in my head, but with the balance of my entire being. A Western doctor would have made specific and very focussed investigations. There is no right or wrong in this, it's just different.

### Care seems to be a key word both from a product and a cultural point of view. Do you agree?

Definitely, and the cultural aspect has a strong influence on the products we design. Take Muji, it's an Asian brand that represents a certain kind of philosophy through its products: no fancy names, the aim is that the products blend-in with our daily lives. At the other opposite, brands with a very strong personality, like Dyson, tell a story of technology and efficiency. In both cases, yet in a different way, caring can connect with the different products and the different cultures.

### What are the major challenges facing our societies in the near future with regards to sustainability, in terms of product design?

We really have too many products. There is too much stuff in our lives, and that is one of the challenges we might have to address in the near future. Great designers will need to be great curators, in order to re-purpose the stuff we already have. We have so many products in our living environment. We've also become too convenient. We've lost the essence of what we really need. How do we curate our things in order to optimise our purchasing in a purposeful manner, and avoid to over-consume? The idea of curation is that we still create stuff, but more purposefully. In designing new retail experiences, the focus is much less on "new, bigger, iconic", and a lot more on curating a range of products customers need in the store.

Fundamentally, we need to change our mindset and our behaviours

### Are we consuming too much, too fast?

We need to slow down. We're educating our children that they can have whatever they possibly can dream of, delivered instantly. We need to learn and teach patience again, a long-lost virtue, definitely out of fashion in today's world. In post-Covid society, everyone thinks that smart-work is wonderful, since one can work from home: it is not. It's horrible. We're turning into zombies, typing on our keyboards and talking to our computers all day, all alone. We need that in-person chat over coffee, we need that human contact. That's where we get our inspiration for innovation. At M.I.T. we're famous for technology, and we can design technology, but how do we do it "with human temperature"?

As a designer I dreamt of designing an iconic chair. The chair is possibly the symbol of ego-driven design, and I think design should be embedded in the environment. The best design is non-design. Most design masters want to leave their signature on their work. We need to learn to be more humble, especially since AI is now around. We now have new tools to help us in the process, but we have to know how to use them purposefully, so being a curator is much more important.

### How can we ensure that Design positively impacts the domestic environment, also from a cultural perspective?

Understanding intentions is the key. I worked on a project that aimed to make M.I.T. labs carbon-neutral by 2030. It was an overwhelming task, but I started by talking to the people working in those labs to understand the purpose and the intentions and behaviours behind processes. The human side is very important, because that's what will determine whether any policy you might put in place will be followed or not. So if we want to have an impact on domestic life, we need to clearly understand motives and intentions first.

# History through form, form through history

**14** chairs that made the history of design, which also brilliantly and uniquely represent significant moments in the greater history of our world.

In 1957, German celebrity architect Mies van der Rohe, an eminent member of the Bauhaus, told Time Magazine: "The chair is a very difficult object to design. Anyone who tried to draw one knows that. There are endless possibilities and many problems: the chair must be light, it must be robust, it must be comfortable. It's almost easier to build a skyscraper than a chair."

Yet virtually no architect, designer or craftsman has escaped his conception. Perhaps because it is indeed the most difficult challenge, combining in itself technology, aesthetics and innovation. The chair is probably also the object in which function and aesthetics are reflected more than in any other design product: its essential feature - to support the body of a person who does not stand still, but on the contrary, gets up, rocks, leans on it - is all one with the lines and shapes that define its aspect.

Chairs have been a major source of inspiration for designers of all times. They've sparked imagination, creativity, and innovation. They commanded the exploration of new styles, and the experimenting with various materials and different production methods, from traditional materials like wood, to steel and aluminum, to futuristic materials like polypropylene, tech-polymers, polycarbonate, and carbon fibre.

Chairs tell the story of humanity. The way they're designed, the materials they're made from, and how they're shaped all show the style of a specific time in history and of a broader historical context.



**N.14 - Gebrüder Thonet Vienna 1860**

The chair of chairs. The great classic. The most known, and sold, product. Designed by Michael Thonet in 1860, the No.14, or simply Thonet, was created to furnish the Café Daum, an elegant and modern new establishment that opened in Vienna that same year. Minimalist in the use of materials and in the number of pieces it's made up of, only six, the n.14 is the result of twenty years of technological research. Made from skilfully steam-curved pieces of solid beech wood, the Thonet was the first to have a backrest and back legs coming from a single piece of wood, forming one elegant curve. This chair is often seen as the very first example of industrial design because it was the first to be mass-produced.

[www.gebruederthonetvienna.com](http://www.gebruederthonetvienna.com)



**Chaise A - Tolix 1934**

Also known as Marais a chair, French Tolix chair model A is the first industrial stackable chair. It was conceived in 1934 by visionary French metalworker Xavier Pauchard, who invented steel galvanising for the furniture industry in 1907 and founded the Tolix metal furniture factory in 1927. The model A chair was conceived as an outdoor piece for all weathers, hence the perforated seats to drain the rain. In 1956 the classic Tolix was created: With a thinner structure, it was possible to stack 25 chairs up to a height of 2.3 meters. The chair was created with the idea that design elegance, comfort and strength could coexist in a single product. It soon became the favourite chair in cafes and retro kitchens around the world. It was also used to beautify the decks of ocean liner Normandy in 1935, and it crowded the corridors of the Exposition Internationale - Arts et techniques in 1937.

[www.tolix.nl](http://www.tolix.nl)



Credits: Luisa chair by Franco Albini  
Cassina iMaestri collection, ph. De Pasquale + Maffini

**Luisa - Cassina Design Franco Albini 1939-1955**

The Luisa armchair is the result of fifteen years of research, focused on the creation of an archetype that could identify the essential elements of the chair and its possible uses in the domestic space. An ideal model, in which Italian architect and designer Franco Albini fully expresses the poetry of "substance in form" by increasing the thickness of the single wooden elements joining the different parts. After several improvements, the final version presented in 1955 earned its creator the Compasso d'Oro ADI award. The design is quite simple yet rather ingenious. The seat and backrest are like two flat shapes hanging on a thin wooden frame with trestle sides

[cassina.com](http://cassina.com)



**Eames Plastic Chair DSW - Vitra Design Charles & Ray Eames 1950**

The Eames chair was created in 1948 by Charles & Ray Eames at the International Competition for Low-cost Supplies Design, organised by MOMA in New York. The design was born with the intention of creating an object that was highly practical and useful. Eames embodies the philosophy of the two designers: obtaining the maximum from the minimum. Their goal was to focus on mass production with an object that could be used by everyone in any environment and in any context. Its absolute adaptability, ease of cleaning and its robustness are the reason for its success even today, as it stands as a true icon as well as one of the most copied and imitated models in the world.

[vitra.com](http://vitra.com)



**Tulip - Knoll Design Eero Saarinen 1957**

What inspired this chair, designed by Finnish- American architect Eero Saarinen for Knoll is the designer's obsession with purity. Tulip originates from the desire to eliminate the "ugly, confused, restless world" created by the tangle of legs under and around the table. Tuli sees the light after five years of design efforts as part of the Pedestal collection, centred around a single central pedestal, a cup base surmounted by a shell that recalls the flower that gave it its name. When the chair was put into production in 1958, Saarinen was only partly satisfied because it was not produced from a single mould and different materials, which contradicted his "one piece, one material" motto. The base was made of cast metal because at that time plastic was not able to withstand the weight of an adult.

<https://www.knoll-int.com/home>



Credits: 699 Superleggera chair by Gio Ponti - Cassina iMaestri Collection, ph. Valentina Sommariva

**99 Superleggera chair - Cassina Design Gio Ponti 1957**

Since its launch in 1957, the 699 Superleggera wooden chair embodies a unique fusion of Gio Ponti's innovative exploration and Cassina's avant-garde experimentation. It stands as an unequivocal symbol of modernity, artistry and craftsmanship. The chair's design feat lies in the triangular leg cross-section, measuring a mere 18 mm, and an astonishingly minimal weight of just 1,700 grams. It is so incredibly lightweight that it can be effortlessly lifted with a single finger, as demonstrated by the child featured in the iconic advertising poster that introduced this masterpiece to the world.

This chair represents a harmonious fusion of artisanal craftsmanship and industrial ingenuity, drawing inspiration from the traditional Ligurian keys. The initial version, available in natural ash with options for black or white lacquer finishes and a woven rattan cane seat, underwent a captivating evolution over time. It now boasts a vibrant array of colourful variations, featuring upholstered seats, in addition to exclusive special editions.

[cassina.com](http://cassina.com)





7

**Panton Chair - Vitra**  
Design Verner Panton  
1967

Designed in the mid-1950s and produced by Vitra in 1967, the Pantan Chair by Danish designer Verner Panton is the first chair made entirely of plastic, using a single mould. The first models were produced in polyester reinforced with fibroresin, an inexpensive and strong material. It was subsequently made using rigid polyurethane foam, now used to produce the Pantan Chair Classic with a glossy surface, in addition to the Pantan Chair version made of polypropylene with a matt finish. One of Panton's key goals had finally been achieved: making the plastic chair an affordable industrial product. The form of this chair is fluid and features anthropomorphic design elements, meticulously crafted to embrace and mirror the contours of the human body. This distinctive quality, coupled with the choice of materials and its remarkable adaptability, constitutes the primary factors that made this stackable chair a 20th-century design icon.

vitra.com



8

**Universale - Kartell**  
Design Joe Colombo  
1967

The Universal chair by Joe Colombo is the first plastic chair for adults, produced in ABS. Its design began in 1965 but due to technical difficulties in creating the mould, its production only started in 1967. The structure, with a single backrest and seat element and legs applied by pressure, has several elements to it that made its production rather difficult. The first one being the "hole": it would greatly complicate the moulding because it could weaken the entire structure, yet it was the detail that characterised it aesthetically and was also functional for a better grip in handling the chair. A second aspect was the choice of materials, which had to be humidity proof for outdoors use. This is why Kartell had to employ different materials over the years. Initially ABS and then nylon, which in the long run didn't prove that resistant to atmospheric agents and was therefore replaced with polypropylene. In 2012, after 45 years of uninterrupted production, it was taken out of the catalog.

kartell.com



9

**.03 chair - Vitra**  
Design Maarten Van Severen  
1998

The .03 chair, was Maarten Van Severen's first chair produced by Vitra. It became one of his most famous pieces. Van Seeveren's projects are characterised by a rigorous form, the result of in-depth research and a design process that seeks the essence through gradual reduction and refinement. The distinctive aesthetic feature of the .03 chair is about its sober and slender shape, a design that perfectly expresses the concept of 'less is more'. Despite the rather austere tubular steel structure, the chair is at the same time unexpectedly comfortable: the shell, made of high strength polyurethane foam, adapts to the body. The shell also hides ingenious mechanisms: the backrest is flexible thanks to integrated composite springs that make the .03 one of the most comfortable and versatile chairs around.

vitra.com



10

**Louis Ghost - Kartell**  
Design Philippe Stark  
2002

Louis Ghost is one of the world's bravest examples of injecting polycarbonate into a single mould without any joints. A seat inspired by the lines of the Louis XV armchair, the archetype of baroque, that Philippe Stark reinterpreted with the intent to amaze, excite, and fascinate. Despite the evanescent and crystal-like appearance, Louis Ghost is stable and durable, shock-proof and weatherproof, stackable to up to six units. A product with a strong charisma and remarkable aesthetic appeal, perfect in any context, domestic or public. Today the production process has been updated and the Louis Ghost chair is made from a kind of polycarbonate deriving largely from industrial waste cellulose and ISCC\* certified paper (International Sustainability and Carbon Certification).

kartell.com



11

**Chair\_One - Magis**  
Design Konstantin Grcic  
2003

The idea to leverage the potential of die-cast aluminum - a technology that produces complex three-dimensional metal shapes - to create a new seat characterised by three-dimensional geometry fascinated German designer Konstantin Grcic and led to the creation of Chair\_One.

The seat shell is composed of a number of perforated triangular facets, with the design recalling a football: the three-dimensional shape is obtained by assembling flat surfaces facing each other at an angle. The result is a chair in which the empty spaces take over the entire aesthetic: innovative and futuristic to the point of making Chair\_One an iconic product.

magisdesign.com



12

Credits: Chalet Pinocchio (Brentonico) à Ph. Carlo Baroni Marina de Empresas (Valencia) à Ph. David Frutos; Project by ERRE Architettura

**Snow - Pedrali**  
Design Odo Fioravanti  
2008

The playful and clean shape, the versatility in adapting to outdoor and indoor environments, the stackable design all made the Snow collection of polypropylene seats designed by Odoardo Fioravanti a new classic. Presented at the Salone del Mobile in 2008, it won first prize of young&design. The chair is made of polypropylene filled with fibre glass and injection moulded using gas air moulding technology, which makes it solid and lightweight at the same time.

pedrali.com



13

Kartell courtesy

**Masters - Kartell**  
Design Philippe Starck  
2010

The Masters chair is a vibrant tribute to three iconic chairs, emblems of contemporary design, reinterpreted by the creative genius of Philippe Starck: the Series 7 by Arne Jacobsen, Eero Saarinen's Tulip Armchair and Charles Eames' Eiffel Chair weave their unmistakable silhouettes into a winding hybrid, the fusion of original and captivating styles. The backrest, as the central element of the chair, is distinguished by the solids and voids produced by the curving intersection of the three different backrests, which merge into the perimeter of the seat. Lightweight, practical and comfortable, Masters is extremely versatile and can also be used outdoors.

kartell.com



14

**Apelle - Midj**  
Design Beatriz Sampere  
2013

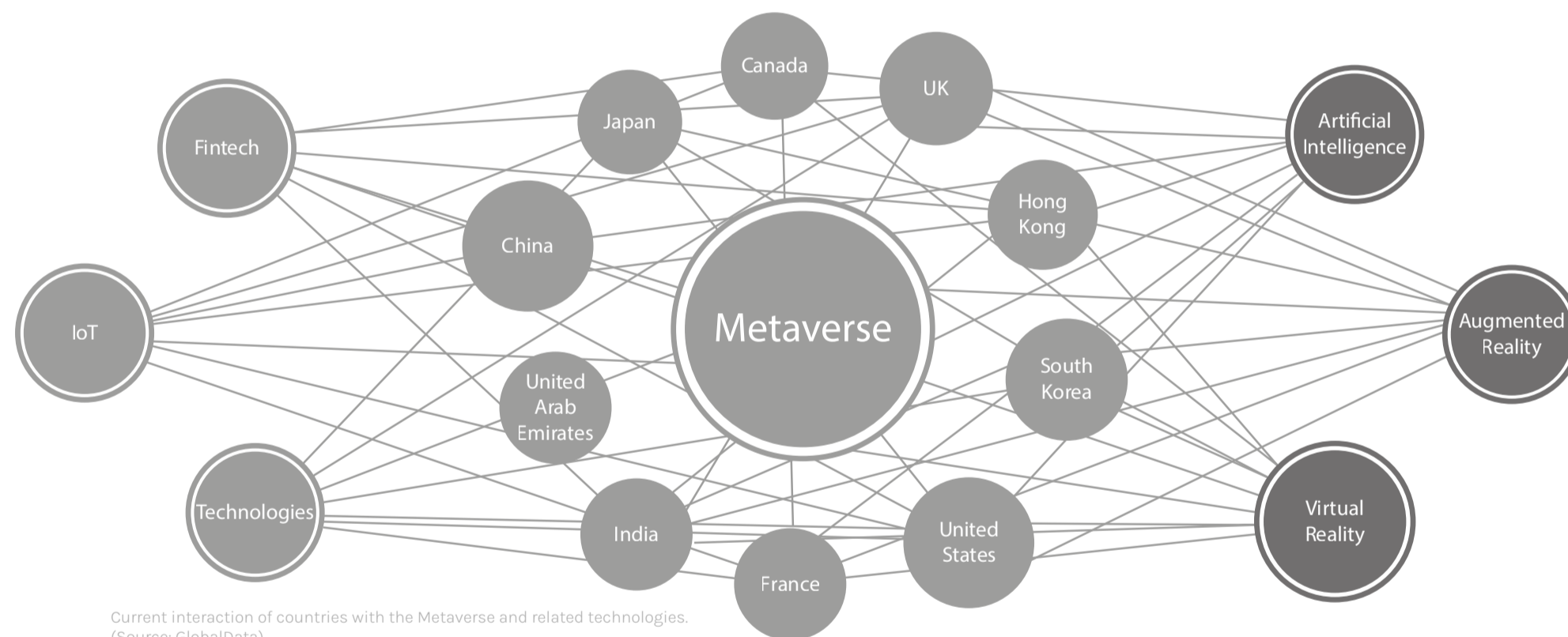
Clear and simple lines conveying joy and lightheartedness and reaching people's hearts. But also greatly comfortable and pleasing to the eye. These are the distinctive traits of the Apelle chair, designed by Beatriz Sampere, a Spanish designer and the creator of the Apelle collection for Midj. The Apelle chair and its family offer a cozy and comfortable seating experience. They are constructed using strong, high-quality materials such as metal and leather. These materials ensure durability and flexibility, meeting rigorous production standards. The chair features a steel sled base that can be customised with glossy or matte finishes. Also, there is a choice of twenty different colours for the leather seat and back, including Tuscan leather. This allows for a high level of personalisation to match one's style and preferences.

midj.com

# China: going for global leadership in the Metaverse and NFT

The Asian giant is investing in the technologies behind the three-dimensional virtual space, considered as a strategic industry for the country's future economy. China's first NFT exchange platform will also be a major opportunity for leading international brands.

By the end of 2023, China will establish itself as the leader of the Metaverse, surpassing the Western economies. The country has greatly increased its investments in the industry, considered of primary importance for its potential and for the impact on the future economy. The advancements of technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality and 6G, will help China gain a position of global dominance as the main digital ecosystem hub. A strategy that currently places the country at the top of the podium of the Metaverse, followed by the United States and South Korea. As a result, China has reconsidered its stance with regards to NFTs - Non-Fungible Tokens - and the business associated with them.



Current interaction of countries with the Metaverse and related technologies. (Source: GlobalData)

## Renewed confidence in the Metaverse

Globally, in 2022, companies cut their investments in augmented and virtual reality technologies by more than half compared to 2021. The department of Meta that deals with the construction of the Metaverse - Reality Labs - recorded the greatest annual losses ever: over 13 billion dollars. Despite this, the Menlo Park giant believes in the potential of the new virtual worlds and despite anticipating further losses in 2023, it intends to continue investing in the industry. The Metaverse is also a momentous challenge for companies: certainly a novelty to develop, but above all an innovative concept that must find its place in society and the economy, also from a legal standpoint. Its impact on the lives of people and businesses will need to be assessed and, most certainly, governed. The Metaverse raises issues about cybersecurity, intellectual property, content licensing, and energy-voracious data storage technologies. In general, analysts predict a reinvigoration of the industry and China is focussing on the Metaverse as a tool for the continued economic development of the country, especially in its industrial processes applications, overcoming the concept that this technology is aimed mainly at consumers.

**"China's growing interest in VR, AR, AI and 6G aims to beat the progress made in the West and position the country as a global hub for the metaverse"**

## There's something about NFTs'

In 2021, the Chinese government had adopted a firm position of closure with respect to cryptocurrencies, NFTs and all related resources, going as far as forbidding trade in cryptocurrencies. In the light of the Metaverse's new development prospects, it is seriously re-assessing the issue, formally pronouncing NFTs as legally protected, thus equated to physical objects, with regards to value, rarity, controllability and marketability. In collaboration with Chinese Technology Exchange, Art Exhibition China and Huban Digital Copyrights, the Chinese government established the first regulated platform for NFT digital assets trading, the China Digital Asset Trading Platform. The new marketplace was created with the aim to regulate and mitigate the speculation plaguing the secondary market of Non Fungible Tokens, and the exchange between copyright users. In addition to NFTs, the platform will also allow the exchange of copyright related to other digital domains.



**"The Chinese government's marketplace aims to regulate NFT and avoid excessive speculation in secondary markets"**

## The success of digital collectibles

From luxury to digital art, there are several industries that are trying out this form of innovative and technological proprietary products. State-owned companies and media outlets have engaged in the production of NFTs, backed by a growing demand. According to the forecasts of AntChain (Alibaba Group), this market will grow by 150% and will exceed the four billion dollars mark by 2026. This incipient industry of NFT 'the Chinese way', is founded on a local hybrid, autonomous blockchain network, protected from the risks of fraud and other financial criticalities belonging to cryptocurrencies. With the same characteristics of authenticity and uniqueness, NFTs in China take the name of digital collectibles.



**"With its character of exclusivity and uniqueness, the NFT also becomes a seal of quality"**

On the occasion of the Chinese New Year 2022, for example, Alipay (Alibaba Group) created a series of 3D collectibles of historical artefacts related to the year of the tiger. JD, an online direct sales company, put a rendering of its mascot Joy on sale. Investment firm Tencent began experimenting with a digital real estate business for its Metaverse future. Also famous is the Bored Wukong art collection, a Chinese-style interpretation of Bored Apes that was popular with China's youth.

The development of Chinese NFTs is in itself a market opportunity. For international brands, digital collectibles that can be linked to IRL (in real life) products can be an effective and innovative way to address counterfeiting. The uniqueness of NFTs, beyond the personal shopping experience, guarantees the originality of the product and the brand. Perfumes, jewels and luxury accessories have been the object of campaigns and collections of digital products and, for instance, Alfa Romeo have created an NFT collection associated with the Tonale model.





## HIGHLIGHTS FROM IFA 2023

IFA, the largest hi-tech event in Europe, was held in Berlin early in September. DM took a close look at the most interesting and significant technology and design trends that emerged at the show.

From 1 to 5 September, Berlin hosted the 99th edition of the IFA. Created in the early 1920s under the name of "Große Deutsche Funkausstellung", i.e. "Great German radio and phonographic exhibition", it was inaugurated by Albert Einstein in 1930, and since the end of WWII it regularly takes place on the first week of September.

Today, it is Europe's largest innovation fair in the field of consumer electronics and home appliances. The 2023 edition saw the participation of over 2,000 exhibitors from 44 countries hosted in 26 pavilions over a total exhibition area of 130,000 square meters. The event attracted approximately 182,000 visitors from 130 countries, who came to discover the trends and must-haves that will influence the industry in the coming months. It was the first full edition after the pandemic without restrictions and it boasted some interesting innovations, starting with the new "experiential" spaces. These went, among others, from the Sustainability Village, which housed a repair shop and an exhibition area dedicated to green innovation, to a packed program of conferences on sharing best practices on sustainability from around the world, to the robotics hub at IFA Outdoors.



Overall, there's a feeling that the thrill for completely novel and extremely innovative concepts was somewhat lacking. Nevertheless, the Berlin event provided a unique opportunity to uncover the most significant and relevant design and innovation trends. With contributions from Studio Volpi's design team, we've attempted to summarise them in this article.



### TOTAL WHITE

Almost a must in the SDA world, Total White is now also a trend in MDAs, for a minimalist, essential look.



# Design

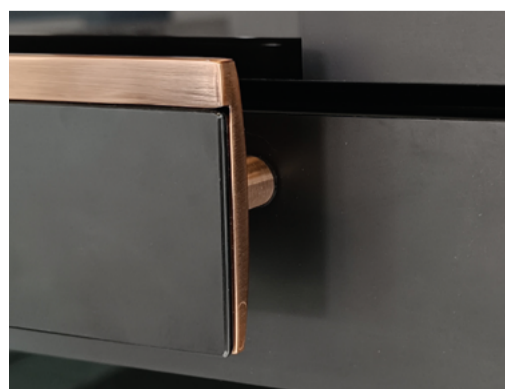
### TOTAL BLACK USER INTERFACE

The dark interface detaches seamlessly from the rest of the appliance's surfaces to mark the separation between the two elements.

# Experience

## FINISHINGS

The trend goes towards satin finishes and the use of backlit panels that can change colour according to personal preferences. The result is the offering of highly elegant, distinct and unique products, allowing for maximum customisation.



## INTERACTIVE USABILITY

Product usability takes center stage, as the graphic interface gains fresh content. The new icons bring vibrant colours into the design, transforming surfaces into interactive, dynamic elements.



The proposal presented a comprehensive, cross-cutting approach, introducing smart solutions to bolster energy efficiency and reduce consumption by up to 20%. These eco-conscious electronic devices harmoniously integrate cutting-edge technology with sustainable materials, championing advanced environmental preservation and conservation practices for a more environmentally friendly approach.

# Sustainability

## The numbers of IFA 2023

Time frame: **1-5** September

**99th** edition

More than **2.000** exhibitors from

**44** different countries

**130.000** sqm of exhibition space

**26** pavilions

**350 start ups** at IFA NEXT innovation hub

Around **182.000** visitors between industry professionals and consumers from

**138** countries of origin



See you at IFA 2024!

When: 6-10 September  
Where: Messe Berlin

-> 100th edition

# The era of the multidoor

Distinctive design, quality, innovative technologies, smart functionalities, space and energy-consumption optimisation, all define the success of a new way of conceiving home refrigeration that meets the changing needs of global consumers and their evolving lifestyles. Along with the peculiarities of the various countries, there is a common denominator: the search for quality and technology that best serve those new needs.



The multidoor refrigerator is gaining popularity all over the world. Market analysts predict that in the 2022-2030 period, this category of household appliances will grow quite considerably at global level, responding to a demand that has been steadily increasing since 2021.

Globally, the preference for these innovative household refrigeration appliances, boosted by the widespread availability of new preservation technologies, is probably rooted in the great social changes, the new lifestyles and the evolving consumption and nutrition habits taking place in societies across all continents. Consumers nowadays are seeking high-quality, high-tech, efficient design refrigerators with high standards of food preservation and great flexibility in the management of storage spaces, and seem to have found it all in multidoor refrigerators.

## Intelligent, low-consumption refrigeration for smart homes and green consumers

The growing trend of designing smart homes and buildings also implies an evolution in the choice of technologically advanced, high-performing and energy-efficient appliances. Refrigerators are no exception: manufacturers are encouraged to make appliances that make the best use of state-of-the-



art technologies, such as IoT and smart interfaces for personalised and digital management. Consumers' and institutions' growing sensitivity towards the environment and energy saving issues, also pushes the demand for low-consumption, environmentally friendly refrigerators.



## MULTIDOOR: PREMIUM FEATURES

- Highly energy-efficient technologies
- Smart sensors for optimised cooling cycle and temperature and humidity management
- Optimum and uniform air circulation systems
- Use of steel and glass for a premium, high-tech effect
- Optimised LED lighting systems

### Optional:

- Water and ice dispensers
- Wine storage drawers
- Large touch screen, connected displays
- Internal display systems

# Growth factors in the refrigerator and multidoor markets



## 1. Social change

In the Asia-Pacific region, a general rise in disposable income, urban expansion and the increase in the number of individual households significantly influenced the increase of household appliances sales, especially to replace obsolete products. China and India are the largest refrigeration appliance markets in the Asia-Pacific region. North America and Europe, another two titan markets for refrigerators, are characterised by a greater concentration of innovation and technological advancement. In particular, refrigeration solutions have been introduced in Europe to in response to new expectations in terms of quality and customisable technological products. In effect, these products need to meet the changing specifications linked to the new kitchen design trends. The Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Oceania may be minor markets in absolute terms, but are quite



significant in terms of overall sales volumes and are indeed interesting for producers since they are almost entirely fuelled by imports. Other growth factors in the domestic refrigeration market are linked to the emerging stay-home and cook trend as a cool way to entertain that has undoubtedly contributed to the increasing demand for refrigerators in general and multidoor in particular.

## 2. New lifestyles: quality food

The demand for healthy and quality food is booming globally. China is confirmed as the largest importer of Food & Beverage in the world, with import volumes that continue to grow, free from the negative effects of the pandemic. The needs of Chinese consumers are evolving fast, in step with greater economic well-being and evolving lifestyles. They have become more inclined to follow the latest trends and take up new eating habits. Greater internationality and greater focus on sustainability and digitalisation are among the distinctive traits of a new generation of Chinese consumers, who are now on a quest for ever greater quality.



## Markets for multidoor refrigerators

North America	Europe	Asia Pacific	South America	Middle East and Africa
United States Canada Mexico	Germany UK France Italy Russia Turkey ...	China Japan Korea India Australia Indonesia Thailand Philippines Malaysia Vietnam	Brazil Argentina Colombia ...	Saudi Arabia United Arab Emirates Egypt Nigeria South Africa



Europe is growing increasingly conscious of the connection between nutrition and health. Together with sustainability and price, health is among the main drivers of purchasing behaviours, with an eye on the authenticity and the origin of products. "Made in Italy" products still retain their appeal in the new lifestyles of the Old Continent. A study of consumers in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK, reveals the growing interest of people in the effects of food in terms of well-being and in the

impact production and distribution processes have on the environment. Preference for a healthy diet is more marked in Southern Europe countries than markets Northern European. Compared to other countries, Italy is more sensitive to health issues and sustainability rather than price in their food choices. Globally, the search for both quality and affordable prices are leading to more focus and careful selection when it comes to food purchases and storage.

## The new kitchen

Kitchen interior design is changing, driven by new lifestyles and amazing technological innovations. The modern kitchen is a social hub, furnished with modular, sophisticated design elements. Here the refrigerator - and even more so the multidoor - is indeed displayed as a distinctive element of the furniture and a status symbol: it can only be high-tech, with a minimalist sleek design, premium surfaces and integrated smart functions. The latter are an absolute must in latest-generation technological kitchens, which are increasingly characterised by an innovative and highly functional design.

## A hub for food preservation

High-performance innovative refrigerators - such as the multidoor models - meet new styles of food consumption and buying habits, more focussed on quantity, but above all on quality. Therefore, the trend that clearly emerges, transversally and at global level, is that of multispace appliances, able to maintain food fresher and for longer, with humidity control and compartments set at different temperatures, and with maximum flexibility in the management of the interior cavity. The architecture of the multidoors particularly lends itself to this purpose, making the refrigerator a storage hub with customisable climate zones and drawers, centred on the eating habits of the household.

Fresh vegetables and fruit, meat and fish, are kept in the best possible conditions to ensure top nutritional and organoleptic performance. Some compartments will easily and instantly convert from freezer to refrigerator and vice versa in order to expand, or shrink, the space at will in case some extra storage space is needed for fresh/frozen food. Most multidoor refrigerators, from French doors to four doors, have premium features, sporting advanced technologies for storing and managing food, smart functions and a distinctive, elegant design that makes this type of refrigerator an appliance that perfectly matches the style and modernity of contemporary kitchens.



## Multidoor generation



### FOUR DOORS:

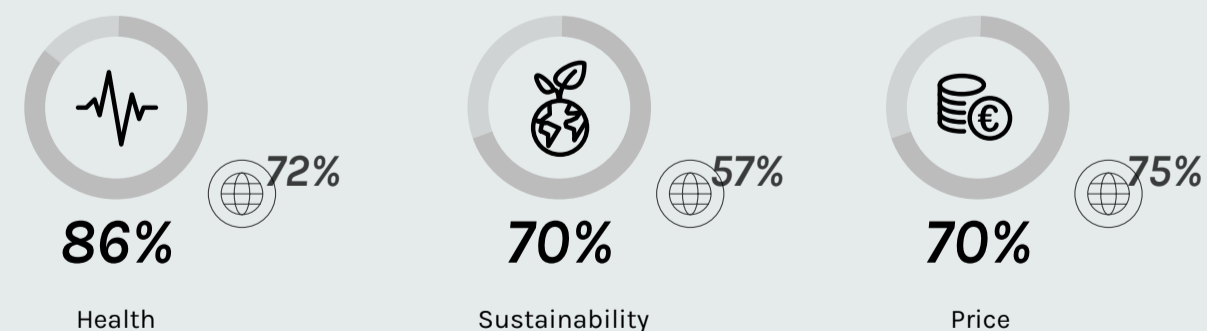
Two pairs of side by side doors, the top pair for the refrigerator part, and the bottom one for the freezer. In this category several models are equipped with water/ice dispensers, as well as internal viewing systems, and large touch-screen connected displays.



### FRENCH DOORS:

inspired by the design of French wardrobes. The upper part features two doors placed side by side (like the doors of a wardrobe), whilst the lower part consists of two drawers, or three or just one in some models. The side by side doors give access to the entire cavity of the refrigerator, which has no central partition, with the drawers making up the freezer part at the bottom of the appliance.

### RELEVANCE OF HEALTH/ SUSTAINABILITY/PRICE IN THE ASSESSMENT OF FOOD CONSUMPTION



(source: The Conscious Consumer - Deloitte)

At global level, savings behaviours are emerging as a way to mitigate the pressure of rising retail prices. Grocery buyers are likely to spend more time planning for groceries shopping (41%) and choose to eat at home (45%). Many make new food choices, such as vegetable proteins; in any case, people are not willing to give up eating fresh food in favour of processed food.

# BEATING FOOD FASHIONS WITH TRADITION AND CREATIVITY

At 66, Deng Huadong is considered the master of Sichuan cuisine. His iconic restaurants are a place of pilgrimage for foodies and learned lovers of traditional Sichuan cuisine from all over the world.



Beyond providing an extraordinary food journey into authenticity and a true gastronomic experience, a meal at DH's is about rediscovering a way of life and a twice-millenary culture. Everything slows down, and time reverses to the origins of one of the most refined cuisine of China's immensely diverse gastronomic landscape. The master loves talking to his guests, explaining the reasons behind every technique and ingredient, making the experience even more enjoyable and enriching.

Young Deng Huadong never planned to become a chef, though, as he was hoping to embrace a military career. Things didn't turn out as he'd expected, and he started training as a professional cook, but he soon learned that as a chef, knowledge about produce and how to best treat it in the kitchen, combined with a personal touch of creativity, could turn a simple, common dish into a work of art.

## Creativity doesn't come from nothing, it needs solid foundations

Deng Huadong took every opportunity to learn and practise his craft. First moving from his hometown Chengdu, in a

minor rural community, to Shenzhen in 1986, working at several hotels, then continuing his professional education abroad, in Indonesia. All along he kept faithful to his original passion, Sichuan cuisine, and acquired every skill he could to excel in it and bring it to a level of perfection rarely equalled.

Deng returned to China in 1994 as a consultant for the catering industry, though he did not like this new role because the objectives were always and only financial and many of his ideas were instead related to the quality of the kitchen rather than to short-term profit. In 1997 he opened his own restaurant in Shanghai, and set himself as a priority to convey all the variety of Sichuan cuisine and enhance the entire range of its specialties, not only the most well-known dishes. Sichuan cuisine has many nuances derived from local tradition such as Chengdu and Chongqing, which inspire Sichuan cuisine and deserve to be represented and recognised.

There are three elements to a dish that need to be perfectly balanced: colour, fragrance and flavour. The original colours of the ingredients are important, since they get mixed, together with those of the sauces, which also play a crucial

role in balancing the fragrance. This is particularly true in Sichuan cuisine, since it makes ample use of them. All this must be taken into account right from the early stages of preparation. For DH, the most important element still remains the flavour. In China, taste has evolved along with society, and in recent years, spicy was, literally, all the rage! If spices offer a way to further bring out nuances and delicate flavours, plain hot is just too easy and cancels out all other tastes. Again, balance is fundamental.

Form is important, especially in ceremonial dishes, and here too, trends in Chinese society have influenced chefs across the country. In the past, especially in the luxury establishments he had been working at, DH had been asked to produce very elaborate dishes, going as far as representing rural scenes that included Pandas, a symbol of Sichuan, frolicking in the wild. Needless to say he highly disliked this kind of unnecessary frills, but the taste for over-elaborate plating seems to have since faded out, and cold trompe-l'oeil elements carved out of vegetables and other ingredients are now officially untrendy.

## The most beautiful form of a dish is the most natural

The simplest is the best, and Deng is more interested in serving food straight as it comes out of the wok, privileging substance over form and geometry. Ceremonial dishes are not served in his restaurants, meals are pre-ordered and served in private rooms, with the master supervising every table, every day, making sure his concepts are respected throughout and seeing that his guests enjoy their experience to the fullest, providing in that sense for some quite extraordinary customer journey.



## The worst sin is homologation, which equals to loss of identity

Today we have the opportunity to come to know many different cuisines from around the world, which is enriching, in addition to the fact that it means more choice. According to Deng, this newly acquired knowledge can be utilised and integrated into one's own cuisine, while maintaining strong traditional values. For example, traditional "fish-fragrant pork" (yet there is no fish in this dish, Ed.) can be reinterpreted in many different ways, even substituting the main element with a new ingredient, provided that the substitute is treated in the way it should be treated, and not merely thrown in as a replacement.

Deng Huadong made the most out of his encounters with other cultures, chefs, and traditions, importing practices, ingredients and tours de main into Sichuan cuisine while respecting it entirely. Many of his most appreciated dishes were born this way, and his menus reflect this philosophy, an enticing mix of traditional dishes alongside new creations, but all authentically cooked and served in pure Sichuan spirit.

According to the master, a chef has a duty to always be professional and true to his craft: cooking is an emotional affair first, then it's a business, and as such today's restaurants need to be managed as businesses and be accountable to their employees and to their customers. All this requires competence and seriousness, but above all passion, and love.



1 - Sichuan boiled beef  
2 - Steamed Chinese Cabbage in supreme soup  
3 - Kung Pao chicken





# Myths and fakes about Chinese cuisine around the world

Chinese cuisine is one of the three most popular cuisines around the globe, together with French and Italian cuisine. It certainly made its mark on international food culture, but at the same time was the object of many a crime of lèse-majesté, with counterfeits, imitations and outright inventions that amount to nothing less than treason. Some naive, others funny, but all driven by the need to, literally, cater to local tastes.

Chinese cuisine is known for its diversity, complexity, and distinctive regional styles. From the fiery spices of Sichuan to the delicate dim sum of Cantonese cuisine, China's culinary heritage is vast and multifaceted. Over centuries, Chinese immigrants have spread the love for their food to every corner of the world. Today, you can find a Chinese restaurant in almost every city and town on the planet.

## The tale of Chop Suey

One of the most amusing and baffling chapters in the globalisation of Chinese cuisine is the tale of "chop suey." In the late 19th century, Chinese immigrants in the United States sought to create a dish that would satisfy American palates. The result was "chop suey," a mishmash of meat, vegetables, and a starchy, syrupy sauce. This culinary fabrication quickly became a sensation, leading to its viral spreading in American Chinese restaurants.

However, the term "chop suey" itself is believed to be a mispronunciation of the Cantonese words "tsaap sui," which loosely translates to "bits and pieces." This humorous linguistic twist illustrates how a dish can be created, loved, and celebrated under a name that has little to do with its origins.

Chop Suey, a "classic" invented by Chinese immigrants in the United States at the end of the 19th Century



Do not rush through life, pause and enjoy it.

Cantonese Rice, another staple in Chinese restaurants around the world, is totally unknown in China, at least under this name



## Cantonese Rice was made up for European diners

Similarly, Cantonese Rice was another fabrication, born in the period when Asian cuisine started to become popular in Europe, in the 50's and 60's. It took after the reputation Cantonese cuisine had with European adventurous diners, yet there is no such thing as "Cantonese Rice" in Canton, let alone in the rest of China. Chinese restaurateurs in Europe just made up the name for this vague relative of pan-Chinese "fried rice", which is indeed authentic and dates back to the 6th Century. The Western version is generally made with peas, ham and strips of omelet and served as a side, doused with soy sauce.

Fortune cookies aren't in fact Chinese, but Japanese, and were introduced in California in the early 20th Century



## The luck of Fortune Cookies

Fortune cookies, the crispy, sweet snacks with well-wishing messages hidden inside, are common in many Chinese restaurants outside China. Surprisingly, they aren't Chinese. Japanese immigrants in early 20th century California actually created them. They were first served in Japanese tea gardens and later in Chinese restaurants. The idea was then exported to Europe, always eager to adopt the latest American fads, and today fortune cookies are a common staple found in most Chinese restaurants in the old continent too.

## Chicken with almonds, anyone?

Another typical example of westernised Chinese cuisine, chicken with almonds was first introduced in ethnic Chinese restaurants abroad simply because those early restaurateurs were not professional cooks back in China. Chicken with almond is considered an easy dish for amateur home cooks, and certainly not part of traditional cuisine. You wouldn't think of ordering it at a restaurant, nor would a restaurant think of putting it on the menu, yet it is one of the most popular dishes in Chinese eateries around the world.

In China, chicken with almonds is a dish you would cook at home, and that wouldn't feature on the menu in restaurants



## Sweet and Sour debacle

That's got to be truly Chinese, right? Not really, and certainly not in the version normally served in your average Chinese restaurant outside China. Not that Sweet and Sour as a concept doesn't exist in Chinese gastronomic tradition, but it is a lot subtler and much more nuanced. Balance of flavours is key to the true Chinese way, with a hint of tanginess complementing the sweetness. Westernised Chinese restaurants offer a simplified and rogue version of the concept, often expressed through heavy and syrupy sauces that are much sweeter and tangier than their traditional counterparts. Sweet and Sour pork, a common item on menus outside China, is a typical example of a dish that was created to satisfy foreign customers in their quest for an exotic "sweet and sour" experience. The pineapple wedges often found in it equate to the pineapple on the pizza that infuriate Italians.

Chinese cuisine's journey around the world has been marked by both genuine appreciation and clumsy misunderstandings. While misinterpretations and humorous anecdotes may abound, the true essence of Chinese cuisine lies in its ability to bridge cultural gaps and bring people together over a shared love for a delicious food that is part of a millenary tradition. For one, we should stop thinking of Chinese cuisine as if it was a single entity, and start appreciating the fact that there is indeed a myriad of different cuisines in China, each with its own characteristics, ingredients and flavours, with each and everyone of them worth discovering for what it truly is.

# Glossary

The Homa Essential Design Glossary: a quick reference guide to some of the concepts inspiring Homa's design philosophy. They define the principles behind its continued success as the world's first cooling appliances OEM provider.

## Innovation

/ɪnə'veɪʃn/

The process of introducing new ideas, methods, or products to bring about positive change that affect people's lives.

## Creativity

/krɛə'tɪvədē/

The ability to generate original ideas, solutions, or artistic expressions through imagination and unconventional thinking.

## Invention

/ɪn'venʃn/

The act of designing and creating a new product, process, or system for the first time.

## Ingenuity

/ɪndʒɪ'nju:ɪti/

Cleverness and resourcefulness in solving problems or devising new solutions.

## Novelty

/'nɒvəlti/

The quality of being new, unusual, or different from what has been seen or experienced before.

## Originality

/ə'ɹɪdʒɪ'nælɪti/

The quality of being unique and not derived from existing ideas or works.

## Breakthrough

/'breɪk,θru:/

A significant advancement or discovery that marks a new level of progress or achievement.

## Transformation

/'trænsfə'meɪʃn/

A fundamental and profound change or conversion, often involving a shift in perspective or approach

## Ideation

/'aɪdi'eɪʃn/

The process of generating and developing creative ideas, typically as a precursor to innovation.

## Design Justice

/dɪ'zaɪn/ /dʒʌstɪs/

mainly refers to the bridging of social inequalities through the deliberate design of more inclusive societal systems.

## Cross-pollination


/krɒs/ /'pɒli'neɪʃn/

Metaphorically describes the exchange or sharing of ideas, information, or influences between different individuals, groups, or fields of study.

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Issue No. 3  
October 2023  
March 2024



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