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DesignSingapore’s International Advisory Panel shares key recommendations for Design Education in Singapore

- Design learning will act as a catalyst for the development of a focused approach to enhance competitiveness and improve the quality of life

Members of the DesignSingapore Council International Advisory Panel (IAP) shared key recommendations that will shape design learning and education in Singapore at the close of their fourth annual meeting on Saturday. The panel, chaired by Mr. Edmund Cheng, comprised renowned international design-related and business leaders from the United States, Europe and Japan.

2. The two-day discussion focused on issues such as raising the value of design, shifting mindsets to change perceptions about design as well as understanding the issues shaping today’s world and responding to this through design. This gave rise to specific recommendations on how design learning and education can be embedded at all levels to bring design’s business value proposition to the forefront.

3. “The annual IAP meeting is a platform where we gather the best minds in design to focus on pertinent issues that have an impact on Singapore. This year, our focus is Design Education, which has become especially salient in the challenging financial climate. Enterprises and individuals need to be able to make use of design thinking to go beyond traditional approaches in order to gain that competitive edge. Design learning has always been a key conversation at our previous IAP meetings and we have crystallised these thoughts into strategic recommendations to help chart the course of Design Education in Singapore,” said Mr. Edmund Cheng, the International Advisory Panel’s Chairman.

4. The panel defined design learning as the exposure to and acquisition of skill sets and creative experience that problem-solvers and visionaries use to improve productivity, competitiveness and quality of life. They also emphasised the need for design learning to be a lifelong experience and highlighted the positive impact that this will have on Singaporeans at every stage of life. In order to realise this vision of lifelong design learning in Singapore, the panel agreed that there needs to be commitment and involvement from people as well as the public and private sectors.

5. “Design is a way of life and is learnt from daily life. It is also an integral element in improving the quality of life. Only if you have good design, will you be
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able to reap the benefits,” said Mr. Toshiyuki Kita, Architect and Industrial & Furniture Designer.

6. The panel strongly recommended the creation of a design knowledge gallery to act as an incubator and exchange platform for new thinking, ideas and concepts that will be accessible to all. This will be enabled by technology, and will be a physical and virtual collection of presentations, prototypes, technologies and new design thinking. At the same time, the gallery will provide further platforms to engage with Singapore and international experts who will play an integral role as mentors to students as well as practicing designers.

7. Mr. Dick Powell, Industrial and Product Designer with Seymourpowell said, “Over the course of the two days, we discussed a lot of big ideas and the tactical implementation of these ideas. The biggest conceptual idea we came up with was a knowledge gallery or design exchange. We would invite practitioners, professionals, people to talk, capture ideas, have wonderful prototypes, original thinking and make it accessible to all interactively.”

8. It was also recommended that design learning should be embedded within the core educational curricula in Singapore, from pre-school through primary and secondary school, and at a tertiary level. The panel recognised the important role that adult education and continuing design education plays in ensuring that standards are maintained and enhanced by the infusion of new ideas. For this vision to be realised, there is a need to expand the existing design teaching resource pool. This can be further augmented by engagement with international thought leaders.

9. “One of the first and most important steps to take is to train the trainers. Singapore has access to talent both locally and internationally, and is well placed to elevate the level of design experience and expertise. This can be achieved by investing in these talents, such that they become integral in changing mindsets and shaping the curricula from kindergarten to post-graduate levels,” said Mr. Christopher Bangle, Director BMW Group Design.

10. The panel unanimously believes that design learning requires a physical space such as at Singapore’s new University for it to take root and flourish.

11. At a business level, the panellists also highlighted that design learning and education will enhance the competitiveness of Singapore enterprises and enable them to develop distinctive design identities and a depth of knowledge that can be exported worldwide. “Design learning will propel Singapore ahead as it shifts into a knowledge-based economy. Lifelong design learning is the key to raising the standard of design here in Singapore as well as the level of understanding of the
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importance of design and how this will help enterprises be even more competitive,” said Mr. Steve Hayden, Vice-Chairman, Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide.

12. The meeting concluded with the panellists expressing that with diverse cultures and influences, Singapore is well positioned to develop new ideas that will bring fresh cultural insights into the world’s design DNA.

ISSUED BY DESIGNSINGAPORE COUNCIL, MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS & THE ARTS

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About DesignSingapore Council

Design changes and improves lives, inspires creativity and new forms of expression. It also enhances business competitiveness in today’s crowded marketplace.

DesignSingapore Council is Singapore’s response to these propositions and opportunities. As a national initiative, the Council aims to place Singapore on the world map for design creativity. It looks to developing a thriving, multi-disciplinary design cluster of industries and activities in Singapore that has relevance and impact globally. The initiative also aims to bring design to business boardrooms, new audiences and new markets.
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The DesignSingapore Council was formed in August 2003 as a department within the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts, as the national agency for the promotion and development of Singapore design.

The Council is dedicated to enhancing Singapore’s design capabilities and growing the appeal of design in everyday life. This is achieved through design scholarships to nurture Singapore designers, as well as research and development focused on design excellence. The Council has also played a pivotal role in the establishment of design studios to grow the design industry. Up and coming Singapore designers have also raised their international profile with support from DesignSingapore’s Overseas Promotion Partnership Programme.

To create greater appreciation and increased demand for Singapore design and designers, platforms such as the Design for Enterprises, President’s Design Award and the Singapore Design Festival reach out to businesses, the general public and international design communities.

Apart from conducting relevant studies, the Council also explores international collaborations through design-related Memorandums of Understanding and partnerships. These efforts help to establish Singapore as a critical node in the international network of design cities, and to provide an environment critical to formulating policies.

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APPENDIX

DESIGNSINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY PANEL
- MEMBERS’ PROFILES

Mr. Edmund Cheng (Chairman)

Mr. Christopher Bangle

Mr. Steve Hayden

Mr. Toyo Ito

Mr. Toshiyuki Kita

Mr. Dick Powell & Mr. Richard Seymour (L-R)
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Mr. Edmund Cheng

Chairman, International Advisory Panel

Deputy Chairman, Wing Tai Holdings Limited

Mr Edmund Cheng is Deputy Chairman of Wing Tai Holdings Limited which is listed on the Singapore Exchange. He is concurrently Managing Director of Wing Tai Land Pte Ltd and Executive Director of DNP Holdings Berhad, a listed company on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange.

Spearheading Wing Tai’s successful diversification from garment manufacturing, Mr Cheng has charted the Group’s rewarding foray into the Asian property sector since the mid eighties. Under his leadership, Wing Tai is reputed for innovative designs and quality delivery in all its residential and commercial developments in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong, China and North America.

Mr Cheng is Chairman of the National Arts Council where he is keenly involved in efforts at the national level to create a creative and vibrant business and lifestyle environment in Singapore. Mr Cheng also chairs the Singapore Airport Terminal Services Limited and Mapletree Investments Pte Ltd. He sits on the board of SNP Corporation Ltd and on the Nanyang Technological University’s Board of Trustees. He also serves as a Member on the International Council for Asia Society.


Mr Cheng was awarded the Public Service Star Award (BBM) in 1999 by the Singapore Government for his significant contributions to the nation, including his appointments to boards of government statutory bodies and public institutions. He was also recognised by Tourism Awards Singapore as Outstanding Contributor to Tourism in 2002.

Mr Cheng graduated from Northwestern University and Carnegie Mellon University in USA, with a Bachelor’s degree in Civil Engineering and a Master’s in Architecture.
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Mr. Christopher E. Bangle
Director, BMW Group Design

Christopher E. Bangle, Director of BMW Group Design, is the point man for the look and feel of every car and motorcycle that bears BMW's distinctive blue-and-white roundel, as well as the Mini brand and the ultra-luxury Rolls-Royce. Having practised as an interior designer as well as a product designer, he works on the philosophy that car design lays beyond just designing the automobiles that one has to "understand the forces shaping the lives and desires of (their) clients".

DesignworksUSA, BMW's in-house design studio, is staffed with award-winning designers who "create the phones, computers, airplanes, trains, snowboards, office chairs, medical interfaces and all that "other stuff" that play a role in the cultural trends and contexts that (their) cars and motorcycles coexist in."
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Mr. Steve Hayden

Vice-Chairman, Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide

Steve Hayden has created some of the most effective and enduring advertising of our time. He's been the driving force behind campaigns for well-known global brands such as Nike, IBM, Apple, Twentieth Century Fox, American Express, Motorola, Kodak, Cisco, Dove and SAP. A rare combination of business savvy, design sensibility and raw creativity, Steve is a sought-after speaker and advisor to those seeking to break into new markets, cultivate new constituencies, and transform their enterprises.

Early in his career, Steve was both a copywriter and a television scriptwriter (for "Welcome Back, Kotter"), eventually applying his talents to advertising full-time. After honing his craft at a number of agencies, he was recruited to Chiat-Day where he made advertising history as the creator-writer of the breakthrough "1984" Orwellian take-off campaign for Apple. Shortly thereafter, he was named the Chairman/CEO of BBDO West, where in addition to helping Apple achieve its highest market share ever, Steve tripled the size of the agency.

In 1994, Ogilvy asked Steve to join them to lead IBM's advertising renaissance and global brand renewal. He also played vital roles with other Ogilvy clients as a visionary and strategist, earning the agency numerous creative and effectiveness awards. One notable example: Steve is the creator of Motorola's “Hello Moto” campaign, and he is the voice on the ringtone that has been heard billions of times around the world.

In 2001, Chairman and CEO Shelly Lazarus recognized his many contributions by naming him Vice Chair and Chief Creative Officer of the global agency.

As a member of Ogilvy's Worldwide Board, Steve was instrumental in the company's engagement with digital technologies and the Internet, setting the stage for assuming a leadership role in interactive media. He was an early and vigorous proponent of integrated communications, helping to transform Ogilvy's brand-focused business platform into a broader offering – 360 Degree Brand
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Stewardship®. The highest-ranking creative leader since David Ogilvy himself, Steve continues to be an inspiration to young and mature talent — inside and outside the agency — in design, communications, and technology.

Steve currently serves as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees for Interlochen Center for the Arts, an educational organization dedicated to promoting cultural understanding through artistic expression.
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Mr. Toyo Ito

Architect, Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects


He received the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement from the 8th International Architecture Exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 2002, the RIBA Royal Gold Medal in 2006 and the Austrian Frederick Kiesler Prize for Architecture and the Arts in 2008.
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Mr. Toshiyuki Kita

Architect, Industrial & Furniture Designer, Author
IDK Japan

Toshiyuki Kita extended his creative field from Japan to Italy and to the international arena as an environmental and industrial designer since 1969. He has created many hit products for European and Japanese manufacturers, ranging from furniture, LCD TV sets, and robots to household goods and appliances. Many of his works are possessed by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris and other museums around the world. He is also involved with traditional crafts and developing local industries.

He is currently a Consultant at the Japan Creative Centre in Singapore and a Professor of Design Department at the Osaka University of Arts.
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Mr. Richard Seymour & Mr. Dick Powell
Industrial and Product Designers, Seymourpowell

Richard Seymour and Dick Powell are two of Europe's leading industrial/product designers. Since forming Seymourpowell in 1984, the consultancy has risen to a commanding position on the international stage, with clients as diverse as Nokia, Dell, Yamaha, Tefal, Casio, Jaguar and BMW.

Seymourpowell works behind the scenes of top brands in the world, focusing on "deep futures" of these companies by developing as far as eight years ahead of the current market. Seymour and Powell write regularly in the British design press and have appeared on numerous television and Radio programmes on design, including BBC Design Awards, Designs on Your "", Better by Design, Innovation Nation, BBC Design Classics and even Woman's Hour. They firmly advocate that good design is about making life better for people.