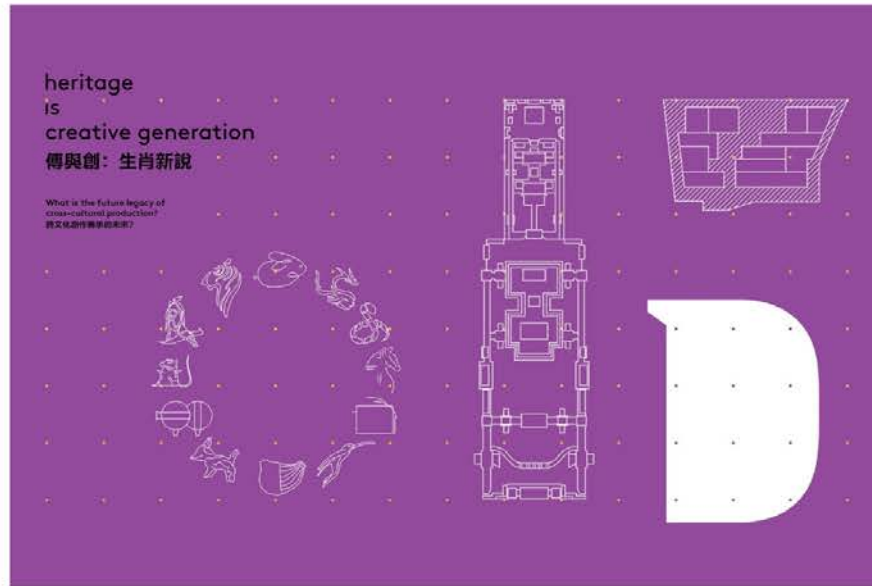


Design · Hong Kong

Reimagining the Chinese Zodiac

Participating in Hong Kong's Design Trust Futures Studio (DTFS) programme, 12 design teams reinterpreted Chinese zodiac animals through a six-month collaborative mentorship programme bridging heritage, tradition and innovation



Courtesy of Design Trust Futures Studio

One of the key players in Hong Kong's flourishing design scene, Design Trust was established to support the creative industries in Hong Kong and the greater Pearl River Delta region. Its flagship cross-disciplinary programme, Design Trust Futures Studio, promotes life-long collaborations through a mentor-mentee programme and creative workshop model.

For this year's programme, themed Heritage is Creative Generation, DTFS partnered with the new Hong Kong Palace Museum to honour traditional Chinese design while injecting it with contemporary sensibility. The collaboration was inspired by Project Twelve, a cultural and design exploratory project undertaken over a 12-year period starting in 2008 that saw one Asian artist or designer each year create a masterpiece sculpture using the year's zodiac sign as a theme. 'We see this continuation as a vital and constructive part in cross-cultural collaborations for future legacy building,' says Marisa Yiu, co-founder and executive director of Design Trust and lead curator of the initiative. 'The spirit of this project is about discovery, testing new ideas and looking at how Chinese traditions of design philosophy can support design processes to generate ideas and new techniques.'

Over several months, 12 invited designers and collectives proposed and crafted new interpretations of one Chinese zodiac animal, building on past Project Twelve works with their own creative input. Each designer-mentee was paired with a primary and a rotational mentor for additional support on materials, crafts and cultural research. 'I've always been interested in how we're shaped by our context and opportunities, so this year we introduced a dynamic dialogue and collective mentoring process, where curators, archaeologists, academics and seasoned design leaders rotated around to support the designer-mentee teams, while designers interacted together to share best practices and concepts,' explains Yiu.

House of Rats, one of the 12 works created as part of the project by Hong Kong architect Bob Pang, is a set of experimental tableware composed of a copper plate and a series of sustainable concrete sculptures that can be turned into vases, bowls, incense holders or any function freely imagined by the users. 'As an architect, I usually manage my project at a macro scale. Making an object was an immense challenge, with some failing prototypes during the production process.'

collaboration, with some making prototypes during the production process, says Pang. 'The rotating mentorship experience was critical to my design process, and pushed me to review my initial concept from every possible context.'

In *Dragon of Our Time* by local type and graphic designer Adonian Chan, the dragon is deliberately devoid of any of its physical features. Instead, the work is composed of three gemstone forms in shapes based on the Chinese character for fear, expressing the intangible and complex character of the relationship between humans and nature. 'I rarely have the opportunity to interact with designers from other disciplines, so this programme allowed me to see the perspectives and design methodologies of other designers, which is crucial to stimulate my own practice,' explains Chan. 'The programme made me reflect on the many Hong Kong heritages that might be lost, but also on how we could reinterpret them for the modern context'.

All the pieces will be exhibited at the Hong Kong Palace Museum. 'The spirit of DTFs is very much about collaboration, cross-fertilisation and cross-generational sharing of ideas on craft, design, fabrication and how the function of a designed object can illustrate a process of collaboration,' says Yiu. 'Analysing and researching the legacy of our rich heritage is our entry point into the collective shaping of our city's future.'

Text / Nina Milhaud

Images / Courtesy of Design Trust Futures Studio





Initial Pairing



Rotational Pairing for
Collective Mentoring

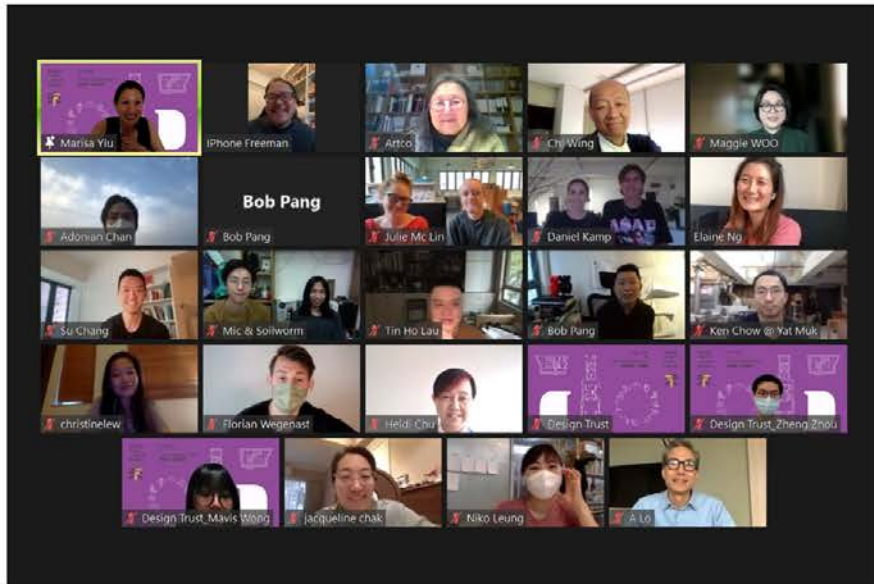
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Courtesy of Hong Kong Palace Museum





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Rat





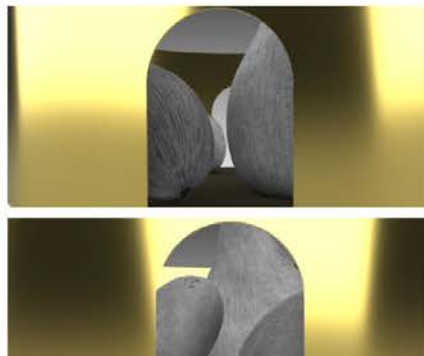
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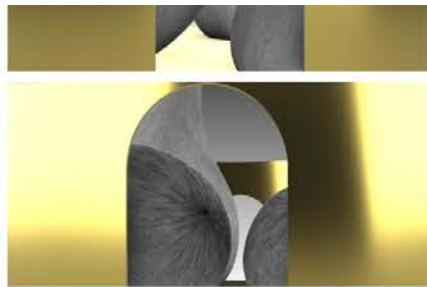


Courtesy of Design Trust Future Studio





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Ox



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Tiger





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Rabbit



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Dragon



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Snake





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Horse





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Goat





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Monkey



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Rooster





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Dog



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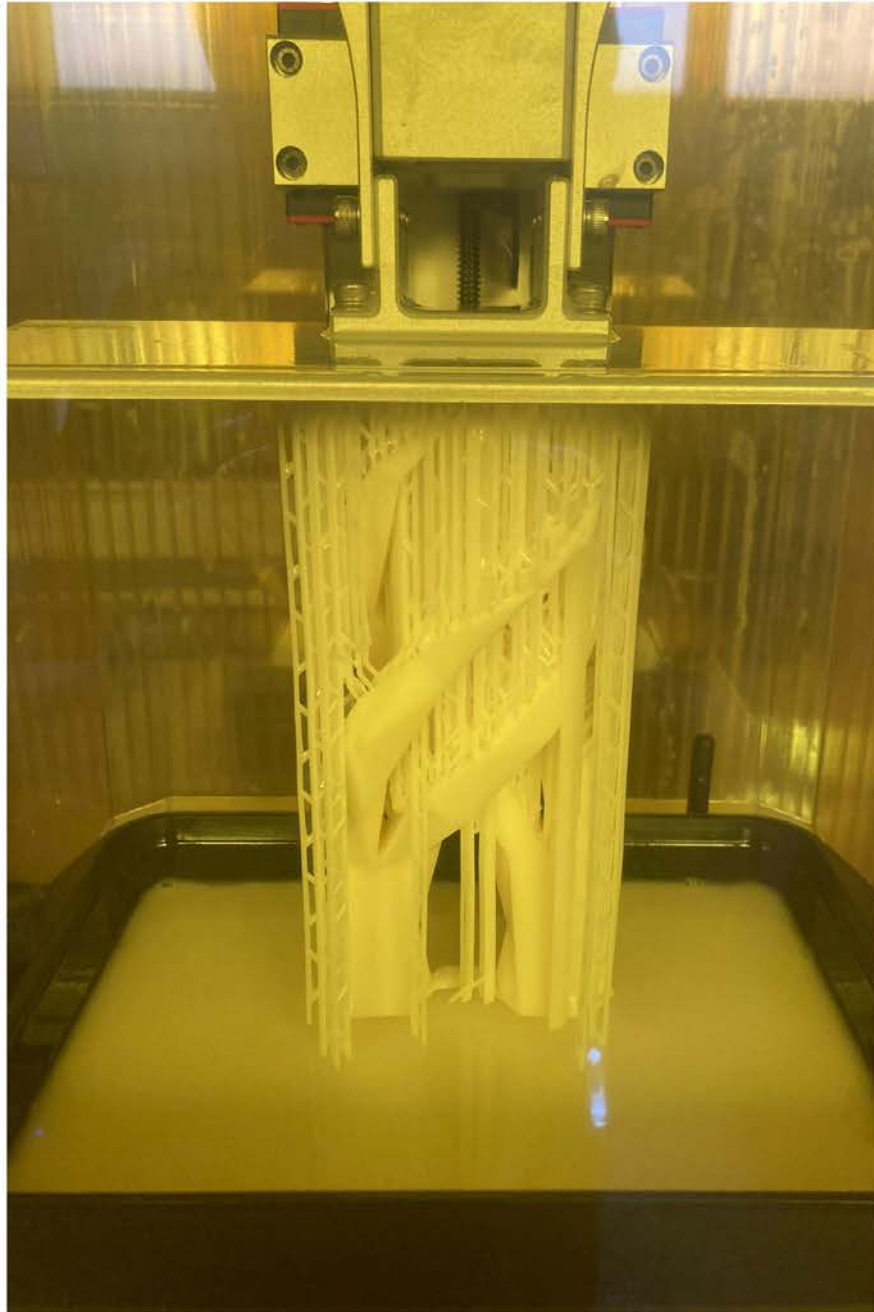


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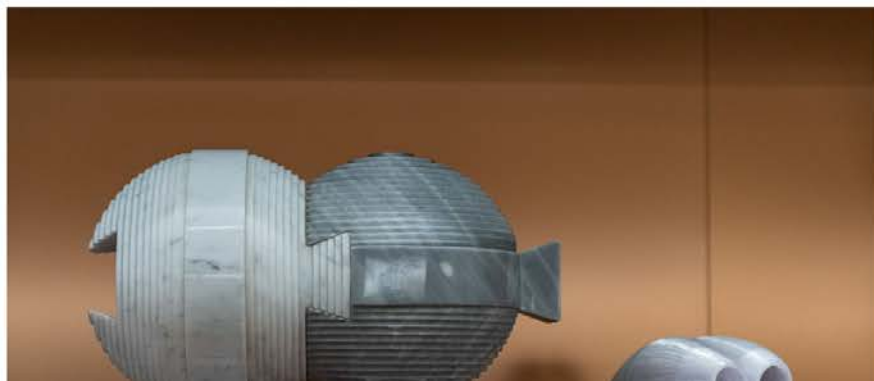


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Pig

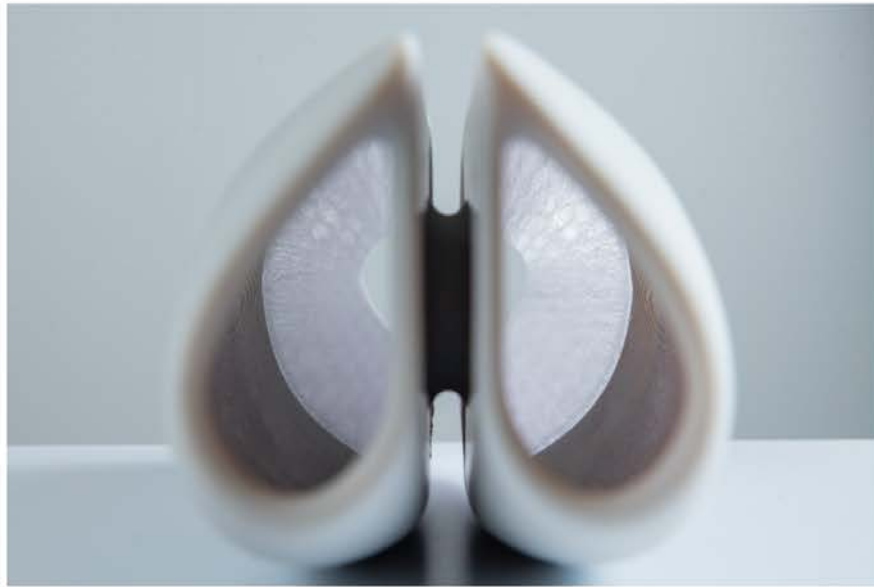




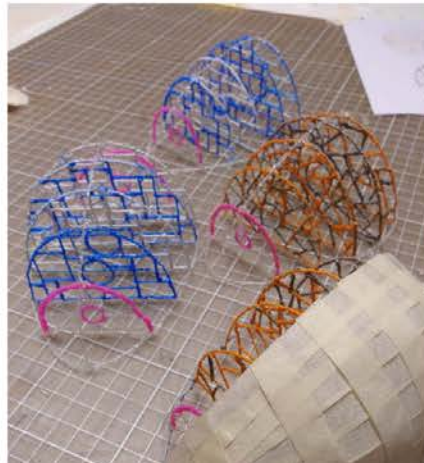
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