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On View: Design Trust Futures Studio's 2022 Zodiac Sculptures at Hong Kong Palace Museum

BY JOEY WONG, DEPUTY LIFESTYLE EDITOR | 13 AUG 2022



The results of the Design Trust Futures Studio's 2022 programme, "Heritage is Creative Generation", are now on view at the newly opened Palace Museum. Marisa Yiu, the charity's co-founder, explains to Joey Wong why a respect for heritage is critically important

The word "heritage" has heavy implications.

"Heritage" implies something precious, something time-worn, something someone else created, however long ago that was, and that should, by some degree of significance, inform some part of life as it exists today. "Heritage" implies communal responsibility; of you and I both, as modern individuals, acting as guardians of something older than us – the same thing that will outlive us, unquestionably. "Heritage", then, implies the existence of radical hope; the acknowledgement of there being a future worth remembering, worth saving.

"Heritage", for the Design Trust and, ancillary to the grant-funding charity established by the Hong Kong Ambassadors of Design, the Design Trust Futures Studio programme, is all of these things. In 2019, Heritage is Innovation served as theme for the year's cohort of designs. This year, Heritage is Creative Generation has taken over.

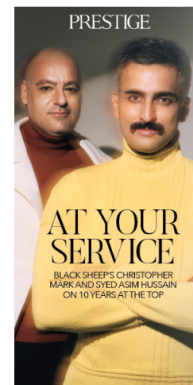


Marisa Yiu before Design Trust Futures Studio's 2022 sculptures

"I selected Heritage is Creative Generation as our new theme for 2022," says Marisa Yiu, co-founder and executive director of Design Trust, "inspired by ideas of creative generation as simultaneously inheriting and innovating.

"There's no power for change greater than a community discovering and understanding that heritage is innovation and how this can be creatively passed on to future generations," Yiu continues. "Analysing and researching the legacy of our rich heritage is our entry point into the collective shaping of our city's future."

There's a lot on the line for this year's participants – 12 designers and collectives with day jobs that include architecture, graphic design and art – as the first-ever cohort of final pieces being displayed at Hong Kong Palace Museum, which opened last month. "The Palace Museum aspires to become an incubator for young emerging artists, as well as designers from different backgrounds and generations, helping them to collaborate and push the boundaries of their creativity," says Dr Louis Ng, the museum's director.



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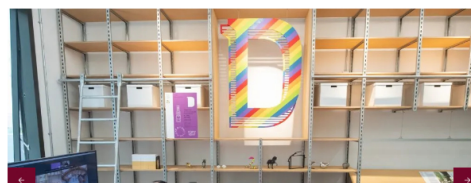
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And the brief? To create an art piece inspired by an animal of the Chinese zodiac; an exercise jumpstarted by Hong Kong-based Project Twelve, which uses the current zodiac year's mascot as theme. Design Trust Futures Studio's recreation of the project, however, uses all 12 animals, one for each designer-collective, with an added ask: to also include references to a prior zodiac-inspired creation already created within Project Twelve's archive. (Here, of course, is where inheritance and innovation make their way into the brief, alongside programme-long mentor-mentee assignments that aspire to even more dialogue between old masters and young designers.)

Expanding on Project Twelve's influence, Yiu says, "We see the continuation of Project Twelve [where an outstanding Asian artist, architect or designer is invited each year to create a masterpiece sculpture using the zodiac sign of the respective year as theme] as a vital and constructive part in cross-cultural collaborations for future legacy building. We hope to continue its ethos and creation of new zodiac design objects to cultivate contemporary approaches to making as an intellectual endeavour that's also inspired by the past."

Edicture's Jacqueline Chak, a *Prestige 40 Under 40* honouree in 2021, was one of the chosen mentees for this year's Design Trust Futures Studio programme, with her zodiac assignment being the horse and her inspiration tethered to a practice popularised long, long ago: from the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE).



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Sancai (literally, three-coloured) is a form of earthenware with, as its name suggests, typically a triptych of coloured glaze, most conventionally of blues, greens, ambers and yellows, that splotch through a milky-white, ceramic base. Rather than use brand new materials for her piece, Chak's contribution to the Heritage is Creative Generation programme, christened Eco-Tang Sancai Warrior, opted for upcycled glass and plastics collected from her community instead. Sancai wares, through history, were used primarily by the nobility from everything ranging from decor, ceremonial objects and, perhaps most notably, as funerary complements. (According to Sotheby's, some of the most precious sancai specimens were unearthed from the tombs of Princess Yongtai and Prince Yide in Qianxian county.)

Chak's decision to use entirely utilitarian materials for her Eco-Tang Sancai Warrior, anchored more so by the used-and-found nature of her plastics and glass, contravenes the customary gravity of Tang sancai ceramics, but perhaps that's the point. Respect for heritage, after all, isn't an insistence on a copy-and-pasted replication of history, rewrought. Respect for heritage, rather, contextualises age-old techniques in reflection of modernity like, say, sancai ceramics through a sustainable lens or, say, using 3D-printing techniques in place of hand-carving, like Bob Pang's House of Rats piece; or, even, experimenting with new materials like camphor blocks while wielding traditional woodcraft techniques, as Su Chang did for his Double Rabbits chopstick-soy sauce holder.

New ways to explore, craft, learn and make are critically important.

Marisa Yiu

All 12 pieces from the 2022 Design Trust Futures Studios' flagship programme are now on view at Hong Kong Palace Museum's Scholars Commons, for your perusal and, if so inspired, your creative generation, too.

"We have a sense of cultural and civic responsibility to directly engage [with the preservation of heritage], or else our cultural richness will be obsolete," the Design Trust's co-founder implores. "So, new ways to explore, craft, learn and make are critically important."

In fact, our futures depend on it.

Get tickets for a visit to the Hong Kong Palace Museum [here](#)

Marisa Yiu	Edicture	Jacqueline Chak	Hong Kong Artists	Hong Kong Palace Museum
Design Trust Futures Studio	Project Twelve			

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Retired Tumblr girl Joey has written her way through fashion trends, youth culture and luxury retail in New York and Hong Kong. Beyond internet adventures tracking down the perfect vintage find, you can probably catch her tugging rags, swigging back Bloody Marys — her third, probably — and making feckish spreadsheets about her

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