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WORDS
OF
WISDOM
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ALAN LO – The Original

ILSE CRAWFORD – The Thinker

ROSS URWIN – The Maverick

Home Journal gets up close and personal with three design personalities who share their creative journeys, unique design languages and personal advocacies

美好家居與三位傑出設計師促膝長談，了解他們的創作歷程，獨特設計語言和個人主張



ILSE CRAWFORD – The Thinker

INTERVIEW BY KISSA CASTAÑEDA

I'm not alone in citing Ilse Crawford as my modern-day design hero. The editor turned founder of Studioilse is one of the most compelling forces in design today. Her principles are rooted in the simple idea of infusing humanity into a space. Ilse's interiors are emotional and personal – evoking warmth, comfort and authenticity all at once. Over tea at Duddell's, one of Studioilse's projects in Hong Kong, we discuss her approach to framing life through thoughtful design.

視Ilse Crawford為現代設計大師的相信不只我一人。由編輯轉行成為設計師的Ilse創辦了Studioilse，是當今設計界一大紅人。她的設計原則源自一個簡單理念，就是將人與空間融而為一。Ilse設計的空間總帶人情味，同時予人溫暖、舒適及真實的感覺。我們相約於Studioilse在香港的項目都多利會館茶聚，暢談她如何以貼心的設計營造生活。



Clubsense from 1962/2016, Hollywood Blvd, introduced by Marcus Marclay; Ilse's portrait, photographed by Lella Williams/Duddell's; photographed by Robert Holgen

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— ILSE CRAWFORD

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BUILDING BLOCKS

I've never been interested in trendy materials because, as a designer, it's my job to bring out the best of the context and conditions. I always start with the client and the user – those are my materials. It's about understanding the people in front of me, and really looking and learning how something is going to be used once we're gone. Only after that do we start designing.

ANTHROPOLOGY OF SPACE

I've always been drawn to spaces that make me feel alive and free. Even as a child, I saw how space affects behaviour – some spaces encourage us to become dismissive of each other, whereas others seem to bring out the best in people. For example, when you enter a church, the lighting level slows you down. On the other hand, in a fast-food store, the bright lights deliberately make you move. I find the anthropology of space completely fascinating.

TRUE VALUES

What I've always been interested in is how to bring immeasurable values back into the physical space. I think we've gone through a period when everything was about the measurable. Of course, deliverables exist – a project has to be on time and on budget, and certain things need to be quantified. The problem with that is... interesting, comfortable, beautiful, warm – these cannot be quantified, but are the values by which we judge spaces. So it's really how to marry both sides.

TACTILE APPROACH

Images can be so disappointing. It's definitely something we're conscious of because our spaces feel different to how they look. Hopefully, they feel better than they look. I'm very much concerned about "six inches around you" – which actually doesn't really appear in an image, but you absolutely feel it when you're in a space. Little things, such as the door handles, really change one's impression of the space for the better or worse.

COLLABORATIVE ENDEAVOURS

For the Ikea collection, we worked with natural materials such as bamboo, hemp, glass, cork, seagrass, abaca and acacia wood. We wanted to introduce an idea of imperfection, one which exists in nature yet is something that you don't associate with a big player like Ikea. It took us three years to complete the collection – it was a very rigorous and interesting process that was quite Darwinian, actually; a third of the stuff we came up with didn't make it in the end.

We focused on designing "background pieces" – beautiful designs that don't shout at you. There's always a need for a light that you can have six or seven of, and frankly, these simple pieces are hard to find. The criteria was to come up with designs everyone in the team would love to own – from the design team and the financial controller to the intern.

結構組成

我對新興材料從不感興趣，設計師應盡量發揮現實環境和情況的優點。我會以客戶和用家為先，他們就是材料。了解眼前人、觀察、學習和理解物件會被如何使用，之後才動手設計。

空間人類學

讓我感到充滿活力和自由奔放的空間一向得我歡心。兒時已發現空間影響行為：有些容易令人看對方不順眼，有些則把人最好一面帶出來。舉個例子，教堂燈光會令人自然放慢步伐；相反，快餐店的刺眼燈光會特別令你有想走的衝動。空間的「人類學」實在令我為之著迷。

真正價值

我想把不可計量的品質帶回實體空間。我們走過一段凡事要經過計量的時期。標準當然存在，例如準時交貨和不超出預算，某些東西亦需被量化。但有趣、舒適、美麗、溫暖都是無法量化但同時是評價品質，還是要把兩者結合起來。

精細取向

圖像會令人失望，故在意設計外觀和給人的感受會否有所出入。我非常緊張「身外六吋範圍」的法則，這從圖像無法看出來，只在真實空間才可感受。細節如門柄都可改變觀感。

合作無間

處理宜家家居項目時選用竹、大麻纖維、玻璃、軟木、海藻、呂宋大麻和金合歡木，突顯缺陷美，一個自然存在而少與像宜家那種大公司聯繫的概念。為時三年的過程艱鉅有趣，並帶達爾文進化論意味，有三分一構思最終被淘汰。

我們專門設計美觀低調的背景設計品。人總需要買上七八盞也毋妨的燈具，老實說，這些設計不易找。標準是設計出整個團隊，上至設計和財務總監、下至實習生都想擁有的傢具。



From top: The Collection for Georg Jensen, courtesy of Ilsa Crawford | Ett Hem, photographed by Magnus Marding | 226 Hollywood Road, photographed by Magnus Marding | VitraHaus, photographed by Felix Olet

ON SIMPLICITY

That quote from Coco Chanel about stripping layers away is true in design. One of the things I always say to my students is that when a project is not working, just lose a third. That makes you focus. It's a funny thing, but normally when something doesn't come together, it's because there's too much going on and you're losing focus.

CREATIVITY VS COMMERCE

When I was designing the lounge for Cathay Pacific, it was about embodying the values of the brand as opposed to creating a modern or industrial space. Commercial spaces are now let off the hook of having to look commercial. That bit is done online these days. Actually the physical space is about building a relationship with the person in front of you. It has much more in common now with hospitality now; it's about meaning. When archaeologists dig up a vase, they're not going, "Oh, look at this shape!" They're searching for the meaning behind it. And what we're all doing in the end is reading our environments.

IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

Oddly, when people talk about technology, they tend to fixate on that. But actually, what's really interesting is the impact it's having on everything else. For example, people are now designing flats to let them out on Airbnb. The thought process has changed. In some way, the digital world has liberated the physical. The physical can now just be physical instead of having to do those other things at the same time. If you get asked to do a retail space, almost the least important thing is selling stuff. Today, it's all about communicating values.

簡約單調

Coco Chanel說要褪去層次的名言，也適用於設計。我常跟學生說的其中一樣事情是，如果設計成果不理想，除去當中的三分之一吧，這會令你更加專注。很有趣吧？一件事行不通，通常因為太雜亂，令人不能集中。

創意與商業之爭

為國泰設計貴賓室時，想的不是如何創造出一個現代或工業風的空間，而是要把品牌的價值體現出來。現在的商業空間已不需具有商業外觀，這部分的要求近來都被網上取而代之了。實體空間的功能志在與眼前人建立關係，愈來愈像待客之道，關乎意義。考古學家掘到一個花瓶時，不會說：「看這花瓶形態多美！」，而是尋找它背後的意義。說到底，我們的工作就是解讀周圍環境。

科技影響

奇怪的是，說起科技，人們總十分重視，但真正有趣的卻在於科技如何對其他事物產生影響。例如現在有人設計房子是為了在Airbnb放租，可見思考過程已經改變了。可以這樣說，數碼世界解放了實體世界，而實體世界現在只需保持實體的狀態，毋須同時兼顧其他事情。如果你接到零售空間的設計工作，如何銷售產品幾乎是最不重要的方面；今時今日，傳達價值才是王道。