

CRAFTING FUTURES

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND THE FUTURE OF CRAFT





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INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF CRAFTS

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MUSEUM MALAYSIA
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The British Council hosted the Crafting Futures Southeast Asia Craft Forum on 23 October 2018 at the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur. This was the first time such a forum was held in Malaysia, where key stakeholders from Southeast Asia were gathered to discuss the future of the craft industry.

The Crafting Futures Forum provided a regional platform for artisans, designers, craft organisations, design schools and policymakers to share and exchange learnings, ideas, and to create new networks and advocate for crafts in Malaysia and in Southeast Asia. Students from the National Craft Institute were also active participants.

The forum, themed 'Youth Engagement and the Future of Craft', aimed to raise the profile of craft artisans, vocational students and trainers in Malaysia. It allowed craft sector specialists from the region and the United Kingdom to share their experience with the Malaysian craft sector.

Sarah Deverall, Director of the British Council in Malaysia, said the forum was designed to be a solutionand action-driven platform to help provide concrete solutions to problems.

Crafting Futures is a British Council programme which currently runs in Southeast Asia, South Asia and Latin America. In Southeast Asia, the programme began in Thailand in 2012, and expanded two years later to become a regional programme encompassing Thailand, Myanmar, and Malaysia.

Crafts is a key element of the cultural relations which the British Council was set up to promote between the people of the UK and the world. In 2018, the British Council marks the 70th anniversary of its establishment in Malaysia in 1948, with a series of events celebrating cultural relations and exchange between the UK and Malaysia.

Katelijn Verstraete, Regional Arts Director for East Asia, British Council, spoke about the British Council's efforts to help address the challenges facing the crafts industry in Southeast Asia through different initiatives. This includes helping to transform a weaving institute in Myanmar into a centre for excellence and helping to develop social businesses. In Thailand, it is working with Chiang Mai University with a focus on knowledge transfer and management, research and development, business development and developing youth artisans through residencies.

In Malaysia, it has recently begun working with the National Craft Institute (Insitut Kraf Negara) to help preserve traditional crafts through practical training.

En Zainal Abidin Che Pa, Director of Malaysia's National Craft Institute, said its mission to train a new generation of artisans have been greatly assisted by the British Council which, among others, offers free English lessons to its students.

IMPORTANCE OF CRAFTS

Katelijn Verstraete spoke about the importance of preserving traditional crafts which she noted was undergoing a revitalisation in many parts of the world, through measures such as social business innovation and sustainable design.

Preserving crafts will benefit the local communities by preserving local identities and the environment, and providing marginalised communities with business opportunities. Crafts also play an important role in place-making. The challenge is to develop higher quality products, achieve greater recognition for the work of artisans, and to encourage the next generation of young people to nurture local cultural practices. A diminishing interest among youths has led to crafts becoming endangered.

Dr Lynn-Sayers McHattie, Researcher & Designer, Glasgow School of Art, spoke about the importance of crafts as part of a community's culture and a source of cultural wisdom. She noted that it was too simplistic to think about just economic returns on crafts as it was a much richer area, with social imperatives and impact to consider. Thus, innovation should not be just for the sake of innovation but with a deep understanding of what is sacred, culture-based, national, and what is important as a resource for cultural heritage.

On Malaysia specifically, she said several key issues had been identified as needing to be addressed. One issue is possibly Malaysia's lack of a distinctive cultural image such as that of Indonesia or Thailand, for example. It is particularly challenging because Malaysia has a diverse cultural landscape and thus, a fragmented cultural identity. There is also a lack of design and innovation in its crafts, low morale and a lack of motivation among weavers and artisans, and migration of young people from the villages that has resulted in the loss of new talent.

On the other hand, as Malaysia is a connected and outward looking nation, there are opportunities to encourage innovation from tradition, develop a sustainable artisan and craft community, and a unique and distinctive Malaysian cultural heritage.





Dr McHattie invited three Malaysian students of the National Craft Institute to share their views. They were Ms Afiqah binti Azlan, Ms Che Noor Ameera Al Hadis binti Che Azhar, and Ms Nuraliah binti Sarudin.



ON THEIR INSPIRATION

The students found it inspirational to learn their traditional craft as well as master a complicated and time-consuming skill. One of the students was also inspired by the work of Seni Jari which uses different materials for their woven textiles. Asked about their inspiration for colours, the students said they drew ideas from the internet.



ON MAJOR INFLUENCES ON THEIR WORK

The students wanted to introduce Malay weaving to a wider audience, to be a trend-setter, create new products, preserve tradition, and draw from tradition to design contemporary items.



ON INNOVATION

The students were interested in using new material and new techniques for their woven products, and in contemporary colours.



ON CHALLENGES AS A STUDENT

They found weaving to be taxing as it required a lot of patience, particularly in producing colours and calculating the placing of the motifs accurately.



ON THEIR FUTURE CAREER

The students aspire to become researchers into textiles, teachers and designers.



ON CONCERNS FOR THEIR FUTURE

They were concerned about securing a financially sustainable future in weaving, and also concerned about the lack of interest in weaving.



ON THEIR IDEAL FUTURE

The students wanted more young people becoming involved in crafts, for Malaysian traditional crafts to be known to the world, and to be able to use digital technology to assist in weaving.

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DEVELOPING CRAFTS THROUGH EDUCATION AND INNOVATION

SPEAKERS:

- * Nicky Dewar, Head of Learning & Talent Development, Crafts Council UK
- * Dr Joseph Lo, Chief Consultant (Asia), Smithsonian Centre for Folkllife and Cultural Heritage

The two specialists in craft education spoke about the importance of talent development from different perspectives – craft education for school children, and training in design and innovation for artisans.

NICKY DEWAR,

Head of Learning & Talent Development, Crafts Council UK

Nicky Dewar spoke about a crisis in crafts education in the UK, with falling participation in crafts-related subjects by students, and fewer teachers. She said the tertiary education sector, which is important for combining maker skills with professional practices, was also struggling.

Crafts in school was important because engagement with crafts is life enhancing, and essential to self-expression. Making by hand creates intangible and practical skills, as well as the 21st century skills of collaboration, creativity and thinking. Crafts enable problem solving, the confidence to take risks and safety to make mistakes. Research has shown that expertise in the arts increases scientific and

technological innovation.

A 2016 study conducted by KPMG for the Crafts Council UK, found that craft skills and knowledge have a strong economic impact and potential to drive greater innovation in the sectors.

The Crafts Council UK was working to reignite passion for crafts and making in schools, and partners with educational institutions to provide training for teachers and to link up people.

DR JOSEPH LO,

Curator, Smithsonian Centre for Folklife and Cultural Heritage

Dr Joseph Lo spoke about culturebased design and innovation for folk craft which is created to primarily serve the needs of its community. They are functional objects, dictated by the lifestyles of the communities with designs that follow cultural or customary precepts, materials that reflect local resources, and a production process that is not highly industrialised.

As folk crafts are, by their nature, functional products, they become obsolete when they are no longer needed as the lifestyles of their communities evolve, and their needs and aspirations change. For folk craft to retain its integrity and dignity, they must stay relevant to the community that it was made for, and thus, artisans need to innovate to meet their current lifestyle.

Artisans can be designers as well, and many folk artisans in Asia are already designer-makers. They create products based on their traditional and cultural aesthetics, their products are functional and commercially orientated, and are sold at local markets.

But design skills require practice, and the time and opportunity to practice and experiment. Artisans learn by making, and practicing and experimenting on their own work is more effective than learning through conventional ways. Rather than holding parachute short design training courses, investment should be made in commitment, cost and providing opportunity to design.

Dr Lo presented an artisan designing course that he is developing.

The goal is to generate ideas for

developing new products and designs that reflect the makers' cultural references, characteristics and lifestyles. The methodology is practice-based work, and participants take part in group discussions and self-reflection.

One approach is to ask participants to identify products used in their daily lives or cultural events.

This helps them comprehend the concept of product range that reflect their present-day needs, and to showcase their design as a range of coordinated products.

To train them to consider their cultural resources, participants are asked to express a subject such as a festival in terms of their cultural motifs. To help them to find creative inspiration through emotions, they undertake a meditation exercise to reflect on their life experiences and significant events. They are also shown slides of people in distress or joy or love, and asked to design a product to reflect the situation or emotions in the photos.

In learning colour theory, participants analyse their community's surroundings to draw inspiration from the natural colours around them.

Dr Lo believed that folk artisan can sustain their craft through innovation and creativity, but challenges arise when outsiders present their own design which are internalised by the folk artisans. There are also impediments in

terms of resources, commitment and investments for folk artisans to undertake a design journey.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Crafts in school was important because engagement with crafts is life enhancing and essential to self-expression, and develops intangible and practical skills. Craft skills and knowledge have a strong economic impact and potential to drive greater innovation in the other sectors
- For folk craft to retain its integrity and dignity, they must stay relevant to the community that it was made for. Artisans can be designers as well but design skills require practice, and the time and opportunity to practice and experiment.



future of craft



WE NEED TO learn FROM EACH OTHER & work TOGETHER

IT's important THAT WE PRESERVE



BRITISH

* LOW MORALE & MOTIVATION TO ENGAGE WITH WEAVING * FRAGMENTED CULTURAL IDENTITY

* INWARD LOOKING-DIFFICULT TO COMPETE



Serie Savi REVIVING HERITAGE THROUGH DESIGN





CRAFT GENERATES £3.4 BILLION



SUPPORT & INTEREST IN CRAFT IS







AND ALSO



JUST Some benefits



FOLK CRAFT DESIGN succeeds

CUSTOMARY PRECEPTS ARE THE ANTITHESIS OF CUTTING EDGE DESIGN!

CULTURAL identities

CHALLENGES @ SOLUTIONS

WHOLE ECOSYSTEM > RIGHT CHAMPIONS | UNDERSTAND | NATIONAL WHOLE ECOSYSTEM | SIN GOVERNMENT | THE PROBLEM | BLUEPRINT

INCORPORATE MALAYSIAN
ART INTO OTHER DISCIPLINES PRIDE IN BYSINESS GOVE

HERITAGE?

SMALLER THINGS

WHICH CAN SYMBOLISE MODERN CITIES & LIFE

WE SHOULDN'T
REPLICATE MODERN
BUILDING WITH
TRADITIONAL MOTIFS

UR RELATIONSHIP

PEOPLE Love

LOOKING AT THINGS

BEHIND THE SCENES

Malaysians

HAVEN'T

DECIDED ON A "MALAYSIAN STYLE"

WE TEACH ARTISANS

THE SKILLS NEEDED TO BE DESIGNERS!

PEOPLE DON'T realize
THE IMPORTANCE OF CRAFTS BECAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW

IS ALL ABOUT

THE community
FEELS MORE

engaged in the CRAFTING PROCESS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA



THERE'S A WAY TO DESIGN CRAFT TO RESPOND TO WHAT PEOPLE WANT

> NEUSING CRAFTS THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IS HIGHLY COMMERCIALLY DRIVEN... REALITY MAY NOT WORK TO THE IDEAL.

PANEL

TO YOUR CITY IS WHAT YOU SEE AROUND YOU

CRAFTS AS CULTURAL HERITAGE AND PLACE-MAKING



The two panels discussed the potential of craft for the cultural identity and heritage of a nation, and its importance in place-making.

PANEL 1: Global and Local Branding Strategies in Craft

Edric Ong (Malaysia); Passawee Kodaka (Thailand); Win Sandar Aye (Myanmar); Thiri Aung (Myanmar), and Fern Chua (Malaysia)

The panelists discussed crafts as branding for a nation as well as branding strategies for products.

On successful branding, Edric Ong, from Malaysia, said it must begin at home. He gave the example of the Iban textiles of Sarawak which underwent a revival from 1985. It began with the local weavers and community

becoming proud of their heritage, and eager to share it. The pua kumbu reached global markets and fame after it received recognition of Unesco. Ong said pua kumbu has a strong story because the pieces are woven dreams, and each piece carries the name of the weaver and village, and the meaning of the pattern.

Fern Chua, a batik artist from Malaysia, said stories are a key part of branding, and it was also important to know the market to tailor your product and message.

Win Sandar Aye, from Myanmar, shared about how she uses an online blog to share the stories of handicraft in Myanmar.

On the challenges, Passawee Kodaka, of Thailand, said there was a lack of connection between the people and products. People no longer know what it means to hand make things, and if they don't know, they will not be able to appreciate it. This connection has to be rebuilt, she said.

Thiri Aung, of Myanmar, agreed that people do not know the value of handmade items, and find them too expensive. It was important to promote awareness of its value.

Edric Ong said Malaysia faces the challenge of a lack of a distinctive Malaysian style. He commented on a piece of batik displayed by the National Crafts Institute at the Human Library session, and noted that while it was beautiful, the background had an Indonesian flavour. He said the flower motif could be Malaysian but the makers did not know how it related to a Malaysian identity. He also said branding should be considered from the perspective of an identity for a people or nation, beyond being merely concerned about marketing products.

On social media, Fern Chua said story telling was key, as people wanted to know stories. They are also curious about the behind-the-scenes process, and thus, she makes an effort to talk about the source of her inspiration and how she develops patterns. She cautioned that stories should be factual and accurate, or risk creating a backlash. Social media can ruin a

brand as fast as it can make it.

Passawee Kodaka said when it comes to branding crafts, stories of the community are important. In her messaging, she tells the stories as to who wove the piece, who dyed it, and who embroidered it, and the local ways of life.

Thiri Aung, of Myanmar, said in creating social media posts on craft products, it was important to tell the story of the people, place and purpose, to create a sense of connection to the craft and its maker.

Edric Ong offered a different perspective. He said social media rarely has a lasting impact. On the other hand, printed books have a much longer shelf life, and can also be valuable repositories of knowledge of a craft. Hardcover coffee table books are at a different level from social media.

On crafts and the young, Win Sandar Aye said there was a need to promote a sense of pride in their own cultural identity, and to change the mindset that making handicraft is an inferior occupation. She said in Myanmar, parents want their children to work in a professional field, and that people are more interested in becoming a designer than a maker.

A question was asked from the floor to Edric Ong on the process of reviving the pua kumbu, and the time needed. He said the work to revive Iban textiles began way back in 1985 when weavers were encouraged to start weaving again, and to go back to using natural dyes. Silk was introduced, and 'new' colours were gradually being revived to keep the product fresh.

Another question was asked from the floor about encouraging artisans to modernise their craft. Win Sandar Aye said it can be difficult but it cannot be forced. She gave the example of lacquerware makers of Myanmar who wanted to make items only in their traditional colour schemes. She explained to them that change was always happening, and this change would help their business survive. It takes at least six months to convince them, and up to a year for the change to

result in new products. She also said it helped if they were exposed to other handicraft, for instance highquality lacquerware from Japan.

Passawee Kodaka said keeping the technique alive was important but colours can be market-driven. that their products would not sell

The artisans have to be convinced otherwise.

PANEL 2: The Future of Craftsmanship: Craft as a **Driver of Creativity in Cities** and Place-making

Jia-Ping Lee (Think City, Malaysia); Eleena Jamil (Eleena Jamil Architect, Malaysia), and Nik Faiz Nik Amin (Rumah Gahara, Malaysia)

The panelists discussed how tradition can inspire contemporary architectural forms, and placemaking.

On tradition and modernity, Eleena Jamil said contrary to perception that modernity is all about glass and steel, the vernacular and smaller features can also symbolise a modernity that appreciated things that are local. But while traditional motifs can inform contemporary architecture, old designs should not be replicated exactly but be inspirations to create forms unique to Malaysia.

Jia-Ping Lee spoke about the importance of eye level in placemaking as people's relationship and experience with the city is at that level. Small spaces like craft markets and cafés can make a difference to a space, as people experience it at a personal level.

On the branding of a place by its product such as champagne from the Champagne region in France, Nik Faiz Nik Amin said in Kelantan, batik makers often don't even have brands or know how to

create one. He is working to brand Kampung Penampang as the home of Malaysian batik, by rooting their designs in history. This includes using motifs of ancient carvings, or based on local legends.

Edric Ong added that a big Malaysian brand to have gone abroad is the Royal Selangor Pewter, which is a semi-industrial craft, and carries the name of its origins.

A question from the floor was asked by Jacqueline Fong of Tanoti, via Florence Lambert of British Council, on whether architects should be compelled to infuse more traditional craftsmanship into hotel projects, for example.

Nik Faiz Nik Amin said this was already being done in Kelantan where the state government wanted Islamic architecture for all buildings. and this has resulted in rather a lot of domes being built. He said in Putrajaya, some buildings have elements of crafts such as songket. He also said compelling malls to provide retail space for craft artisans could be one solution to promoting crafts.

Eleena Jamil said it would be difficult to persuade the construction industry which is commercially driven. She said it could be a good move but cautioned that it could become kitsch if it was not well done. As Malaysia is a multicultural society with many cultural references including colonial ones, it could also be tricky to decide on a Malaysian identity.

Dr Joseph Lo gave the example of Bhutan which had mandated that all buildings reflect local architectural styles. But as the level of sophistication wasn't up to mark, every building became a replica of the other. To do this well, there must be the sophistication to internalise the culture and find the essence of the local aesthetics.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

Panel 1:

- Branding is a long journey which must begin at home
- Stories are integral to branding, in particular stories of the makers and place, to create a sense of connection to the craft and to promote understanding of its value
- Social media is effective in reaching the audience while books can have a more lasting impact and be a valuable repository of knowledge
- There is a lack of a Malaysian identity in crafts

Panel 2:

- Tradition can inform modern forms in architecture but it should not be replicated exactly. Mandating traditional forms in modern structures can result in cookie-cutter designs or kitsch if the level of sophistication in interpreting culture was not there.
- Place-making is a long process, and requires a lot of experimentation. In place-making, eye level in a city is very important, and that's where small spaces like crafts can make a difference.

WRAP UP SESSION AND THE NEXT STEPS



The wrap-up session was presented by Suryani Senja Alias, who assisted in curating and crafting the forum, along with Florence Lambert, Head of Arts and Creative Industries, British Council, who presented the steps forward after this forum.

WRAP UP SESSION

Suryani Senja Alias summed up the main points from the Workshop Session where the participants discussed the key issues for crafts development and possible solutions.

She said it was notable that the participants had called for the greater participation by the government in terms of policy support, education and awareness, rather than for more funding. There is a need to build an ecosystem to support the crafts, and this requires the cooperation of artisans, designers, businesses, government, academies, educational institutions and other stakeholders. As such, there needs to be more connectors such as this forum to get them together on one platform.

The most important stakeholder are the youths, students and young artisans. The young need to be encouraged to continue in the arts, be inspired by it and nurture it. They need role models and champions, and that's where entrepreneurs and master craftsmen come in.

Collaboration between the different stakeholders is necessary. The participants have expressed an eagerness to collaborate but there needs to be more platforms for them to do so.

VIEWS FROM THE WORKSHOP SESSION

- A need to change mindsets about crafts, through a relevant craft policy
- Increase awareness of crafts and heritage through education
- Go beyond piecemeal solutions to create an ecosystem that addresses the big picture
- · Promote the use of craft in daily life
- Create a distinctive Malaysian identity
- Support the young in craft enterprises, mentorship for artisans and design training
- Introduce craft-making in elementary education
- Expose artisans to the market to help them create market-driven designs

NEXT STEPS FORWARD

Florence Lambert said the Crafting Futures programme had just begun in Malaysia with the British Council's collaboration with the National Crafts Institute. She said the institute is already in talks with two social enterprises to work on other collaborations. Beyond craft development, there are also other aspects of crafts development which needed assistance such as business skills

The perspectives, outcomes and key points of the forum will be compiled in a report as an advocacy tool to get the voices of crafts practitioners across to policy and decision makers.

BOXED STORIES



DR JOSEPH LO,

Chief Consultant (Asia), Smithsonian Centre for Folklife and Cultural Heritage

An artisan training workshop was conducted in Hoi An, Vietnam, around 2012, to support the artisan community of lanternmakers, potters, wood carvers and embroiderers.

It was an intensive session over five days, based on the training course which Dr Lo is developing. The artisans were asked to reflect on their life experiences, through a series of detailed questions.

One of the participants was a

woodcarver. The exercise brought back his memories of returning home after the war, and finding his entire village devastated. He remembered seeing a single bamboo shoot pushing up through the ground. He forgot the episode until the meditation exercise, and used this bamboo motif – to symbolise hope and resilience – to create a collection of crafts.

By focusing not on the commercial market but on creating craft inspired by his own experiences and life around him, he had created a meaningful object which, in turn, also carries meaning and value to others.

EDRIC ONG, Malaysian crafts specialist

He said it was important to recognise master craftsmen who produce the finest heritage pieces which are works of art. Their works form the cultural heritage of their community, and sets the standards for young artisans to aspire to.

He noted that in the current landscape in Malaysia, even the income of master craftsmen remained low due to a lack of support.

"The public has to be aware of what goes into an excellent piece of work. The market is still stagnant at a certain price point," he said.

He said this makes it difficult to encourage younger artisans to pursue craftsmanship without the potential of a decent livelihood and social security. The government could support master craftsmen by commissioning large projects which will enable them to employ apprentices to train as the next generation of artisans.

"It has to start at home," he said.

REITA RAHIM, Coordinator of Gerai OA

Gerai OA, now 14 years old, is a successful enterprise which has helped countless indigenous artisans in Malaysia to develop and market their traditional handicrafts. Reita Rahim said it is important to tell their stories, and not just stories about handicraft.

Through Gerai OA's facebook, she tells the stories of the community and craft-makers, the place where they live, what they make, why and for whom. She tells stories of the challenges they face, from deforestation to lack of basic amenities, and assists them to meet those needs.

As importantly, she helps the communities to tell their own stories, in their own voices. Many of the indigenous communities are adept at social media, and Reita shares their posts on Gerai OA's facebook with additional information, if necessary.

Some of their stories are about land issues, some are simple tales about their daily lives such as harvesting chestnuts or making water scoops from palm fronds.

"It tells us about their lives and lifestyles," she said.

WIN SANDAR AYE,Craft business consultant, Myanmar

Win Sandar Aye said in Myanmar, making handicraft is regarded as shameful and the work of the lower-income community. Parents want their children to work in the professions or a bank, and not as artisans. She is working to convince the young that they can be professionals in the crafts sector as well but acknowledges that it is still difficult to make a good living as a craftsman even at the highest level.

THIRI AUNG, MBoutik, Myanmar

She said when promoting handicrafts, it was important to tell stories about the people, place and purpose. As handicraft items are relatively expensive, it's the story that will reveal the value of these items, and why it's fulfilling to support these beautiful items.

SUMMARY



Folkcrafts are utilitarian products created by the common people for their own needs, and according to their own tradition with resources available to them. As communities evolve, many of these crafts die out when they no longer serve their changing needs and aspirations.

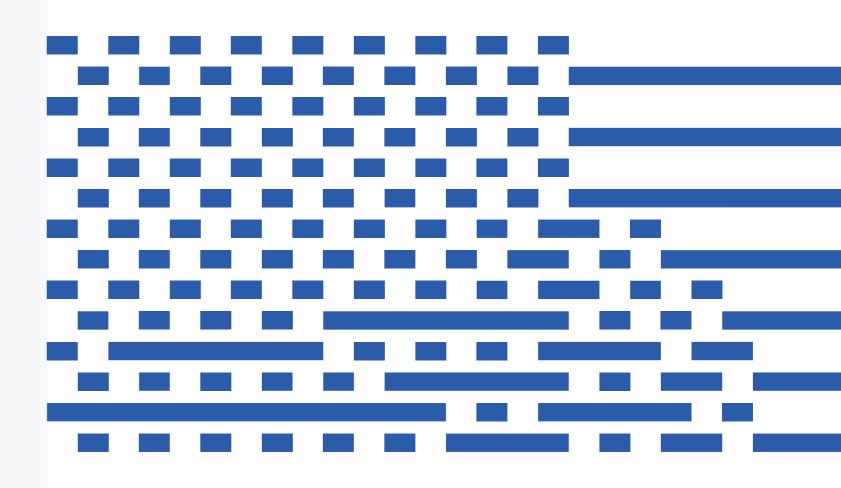
Preserving crafts is important as they form the cultural heritage of the community and nation. It will benefit the local communities by preserving local identities and the environment, and providing marginalised communities with business opportunities.

The challenge is to innovate crafts, achieve greater recognition for the work of artisans, and to encourage the next generation of young people to nurture local cultural practices.

INNOVATION IN CRAFTS

To retain the integrity and dignity of the craft, innovation in crafts needs to be based on the culture of the community which makes it, and stay relevant to the community for whom it was made.

Artisans can also be designers but design skills require practice, and the time and opportunity to practice and experiment. Artisans learn by making, and practicing and experimenting on their own work is more effective than learning through conventional ways. The goal of design training for artisans is to generate ideas for developing new products and designs that reflect the makers' cultural references, characteristics and lifestyles.



RECOGNITION FOR CRAFTS AND ARTISANS

Craftsmen also struggle with the lack of recognition for their work as many people have become disconnected from the process of making by hand. It is important to tell their stories to reconnect people with crafts, and to create awareness about their value. These stories may tell about the lives of the craftsmen, where they live, why and for whom they make the crafts.

Social media is a useful channel to communicate but there is also a need to publish books which have a longer shelf life and a more lasting impact, and which can be a valuable repository of knowledge. Books communicate at a different level from social media.

Branding is also important to promote a sense of pride in cultural identity, and to encourage the young to nurture and cherish their cultural heritage. The lack of a financially-sustainable career in crafts, however, remains an impediment to attracting young artisans.

Malaysia also continues to face the challenge of a lack of a distinct Malaysian style. As Malaysia is a multicultural society with many cultural references to draw from, its crafts identity is fragmented.

CRAFTS AS A DRIVER OF CREATIVITY

Tradition can inspire contemporary architectural forms, and creative place-making. Small spaces such as crafts markets make a difference to

a city as people experience it at a personal level, and this shapes their relationship to a place.

Crafts can help build the identity of a place such as champagne from the Champagne region in France, or Royal Selangor Pewter which has gone big abroad.

However, compelling the infusion of tradition or crafts into modern buildings can backfire because this can become kitsch or cookie-cutter. To do this well, there must be the sophistication to internalise the culture and find the essence of the local aesthetics.



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