

MA Curating Contemporary Design

Kingston University in partnership with Design Museum, London

## CONNECTING CONTEMPORARY DESIGNERS

in partnership with China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China

16th March – 5th April, 2011



*Connecting Designers* is an international cultural exchange between creatives in London and China. The project connects the curators on the MA in Curating Contemporary Design programme at Kingston University with students from the China Academy of Arts in Hangzhou, China.

On March 16th 2011, the UK curators flew out to the city of Hangzhou to embark on a new project, *Connecting Contemporary Designers*. The project sought to explore how, as curators in the current culture of austerity, can we support emerging creative talent using the developing field of online curatorial practice?

Through a series of visits to some of the China's most exciting contemporary museums alongside interviews with their leading curators and practitioners, the curators asked:

*What does it mean to be a curator in China today and what is its future for tomorrow?*

*In the age of global online presence how do emerging designers make themselves seen and heard?*

*Connecting China* visually documented the curators journey from London to Shanghai, whilst providing a platform for discussion surrounding the future of curating as a whole and its power to mediate between designers and their audiences internationally.

**Supported by The British Council, The Design Museum, London and The University of Kingston.**



On Thursday 17th March 2011 eight curators on the MA Curating Contemporary Design course at Kingston University (in partnership with the Design Museum) met, for the first time, 25 students from the BA Plotting and Spreading Public Art Course China Academy of Art's Nanshan Campus.



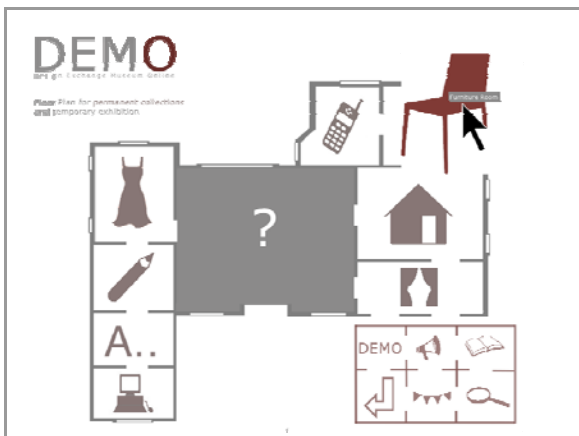
Prior to the meeting, personal profiles of each student had been exchanged, which gave a good indication of potential successful collaborations according to personal interests and previous experience. Over the course of an hour, the whole group had a good chance to share ideas and suggest possible resolutions for the pre-set brief and divided into 4 groups each consisting of 2 Kingston curators and between 5 and 10 CAA students.

The brief required each group to devise a concept and design an interface for an online platform that supports creatives internationally and promotes collaborations through professional / social networking online.

During the proceeding two weeks, the 4 groups worked hard everyday to produce their concepts, whilst exchanging cultural similarities and differences in terms of learning, language and social media. The understanding of these diversities, some more apparent than others, played a fundamental role in the conception and realisation of each project. The day-to-day procedure involved close collaboration within the groups through drawing up ideas and selecting relevant elements to push forward and resolve with intricate consideration of the challenging brief.

Upon completion, the groups presented their ideas to a curator at Shanghai Art Museum, Ning Li and Shanghai based staff of the British Council, on Wednesday 30th March 2011.

Here are examples taken from the final projects presented at The Shanghai Art Museum on the 30th March 2011



### Team Orchid –

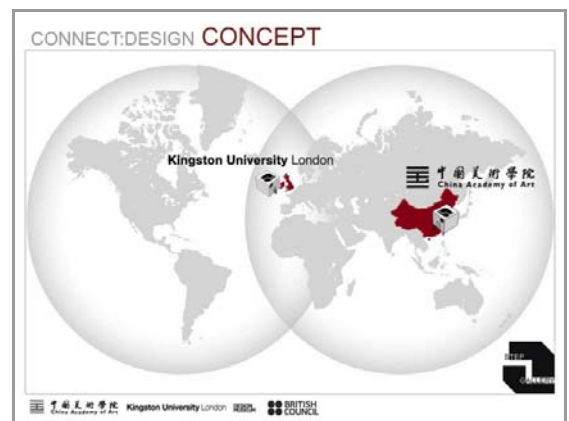
The creation of an online participatory museum called the *Design Exchange Museum Online* or 'DEMO', which takes on the ethos of Web2.0, allowing users Worldwide to upload work to their personal visual area as part of a selected design discipline 'room'. Participants will be emerging designers acting as curators of their own museum, with the creators (us) acting as facilitators to monitor content. The museum will host a different temporary exhibition every 6 months focused on trends facilitators have noticed in specific locations on the sites uploaded content.

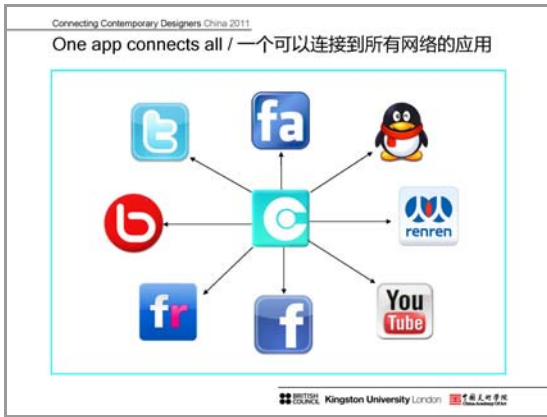
The overall aim is to allow emerging designers Worldwide to promote themselves within their specific discipline, whilst highlighting through the temporary exhibition programme, an emerging or undiscovered area within a specific location.

### Team Blossom –

STEP merges online space and the physical world for emerging creatives, giving young talent an invaluable opportunity to exhibit their work.

Members of STEP are able to upload their work on the STEP website and have their work displayed via digital projection in a specially constructed pop up gallery, that will have a presence at creative events around the globe, tapping into the specialist focus and knowledge such events hold. The STEP gallery simultaneously runs the same exhibition online, making it possible for people to access and comment on the work within two environments, encouraging creative dialogue and exchange across the world.





## Team Bamboo –

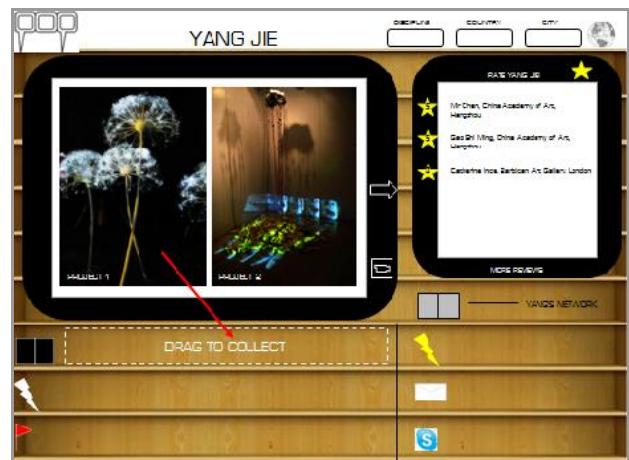
*C-Me* is a connecting platform for emerging and established designers. Based upon individual preferences the platform provides suggestions for linking worldwide to existing networks through common online social media websites. The 'minimum input – maximum output' describes the fundamental principle of the platform. A user would input the information into a central network, which then would be distributed to related existing online social media websites.

In addition, the user would receive comments/suggestions/reviews via an app connected to the platform and user profile. This app will enable all to debate and discuss design on an existing profile with designers worldwide making design a social topic.



## Team Chrysanthemum –

We are creating a platform for both emerging and established designers/curators worldwide to promote and exchange their work professionally in the framework of an interactive online portfolio. Users have the opportunity to send their portfolios across the globe to potential employers and by collecting the portfolios of fellow designers, users can create their own online archive of international design.



FaYa Project has been conceived as a continuation of cultural exchange between Britain and China. The project showcases new work from the 2011 graduates of China Academy of Art Hangzhou and Kingston University London. Student curators from the *Connecting Contemporary Designers* project have been chosen to select their choice of 8 graduates from the 2011 CAA undergraduate show (June 5th) and 8 graduates from the Kingston show (June 2nd) for the web pages of Design Museum, Kingston University and China Academy of Art. The chosen graduate work will include an image of the work and a short statement in English and Mandarin on why the work was chosen by the young curators.

To find out more about the *Connecting Contemporary Designers* project visit <http://cargocollective.com/connectingcontemporarydesigners>