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Kan's posters are authentically oriental. Each of his posters expresses the Chinese traditional style which is tranquil, dignified, simple and clear. A large space of white, as pure as a refreshing breeze, is the main body of the poster. The simple composition of the works maintain a subdued charisma, and awaits quiet appreciation from the viewers.

In Kan's paintings, are traces of ink stains. The brush and ink do not actually create the painting or calligraphy, it is the brush which is soaked with ink that flows gracefully on the paper. The varying density of the black and grey depict movement of an oriental soul. Those wriggly shapes which appear on his pictures, are nothing bizarre, but they linger our hearts, drive people to write and ask. That is how unique Mr. Kan is.

Kan attempts to consistently pursue the oriental tradition and not forgetting the Chinese culture. While for many of us who started learning

Western arts, it requires much courage and effort to create with the attempt to maintain characteristics of the orient.

It is likely that design is influenced and founded by the West. We can now gracefully and sensibly work on modern design, while sharing thoughts among different cultures. Even those known as advanced countries also enthuse in cultural interactions.

Although we achieve this common international medium, it is a pity that different histories and customs are assimilated gradually. In fact, through free and open communications, unique and distinctive cultures can be nurtured.

Hong Kong is an ideal city of mixed Eastern and Western cultures. Though its modern and complex social mechanism run smoothly with its oriental tradition, it is by no means an easy bond.

Mr. Kan's communications design works reveal the same uncertainties of the oriental people. While we all realise the intensity to preserve the sense of aesthetics, and I am left to ponder vigorously on these issues.

Ikko Tanaka
Japan, 1997



July 1st 1997 marked the re-unification of Hong Kong and China. Kan Tai-keung, who started his business in China long ago and who has been a representative of Hong Kong's graphic designers, has followed the natural path to represent the Chinese designers and to continue to make contributions with his talents. Several years ago, I was invited to go to Hong Kong as an adjudicator, and was fortunate enough to have seen Kan's design work for the bank logo and promotional campaign for the issuance of new banknote of Bank of China. Those were high-quality works of grandeur. On the one hand, Kan Tai-keung is engaged in such high-quality works with social effects; on the other hand, his business with ink as the main theme continues. Both his calligraphy and his ink painting have their own styles which follow the trails of long history. Mr. Kan has extracted some of the traditional elements and he uses them in his designs to express the new

China and to create fresh symbols. He had received deep-rooted traditional training in calligraphy and painting and had developed a strong mastery of techniques. He has kept the formalized colours and shapes in his works. Many designers have a mistaken belief that new styles and new symbols are created simply by altering the forms and replacing old things with new ones. Kan has never discarded history. On the contrary, he looks at the formalized calligraphy and ink painting from new perspectives, and tunes the formalized items to such a way that they come in one continuous line with history. The computer has become a handy and widely used tool nowadays. Yet Kan extracts the essence of traditional calligraphy and painting, explains them in a new way, alters and tunes them, and produces works of surface full of wisdom. Ink seeps through the paper, and it is impossible to control the shape

and the colour in a systematic way. Even the computer, spray painting or any printing technology cannot do this. Only through contacts of the delicate brush hair and the paper fibres can marvelous transformations occur. Such contacts are the essence of Kan's painting, they signify the creativity of Kan, and they can never be achieved through stale forms. A poster relies on a limited space as a medium to convey messages, and all graphic designers over the world challenge themselves and keep on using their creativity. Kan Tai-keung acquires his success by blending naturally the effects of the traditional ink with his works of creativity.

History tells us that with just one drop of ink and in one stroke, painters can produce the Chinese Yin and Yang, a symbol of several thousand years, and a symbol of a new era to grasp the minds of the audience. Old tools are laid in such a casual manner that they make people feel that it is just ordinary daily life and that there

is a certain close relation between man and history. The great white space symbolizes the bright future of China. The audience is invited to a new era of serenity, cleanliness and lure; they seem to be enticed from the materialistic world to the spiritual civilization.

The history of graphic design has rapidly germinated and flowered in a regional society and developed into a culture of visual art. Graphic design is very sensitive to the changes in China and the environment, and responds very quickly. In the past, Kan Tai-keung has been living in Hong Kong where he was exposed to European and American cultures; after Hong Kong's reunification with motherland, his business became China base, therefore he will continue to spread the Chinese culture in his works to the whole world in a new perspective.

Masuteru Aoba
Japan, 1997



When I visited Hong Kong for the first time, I have been on a walk through the town at nights when I discovered a very special exhibition of the Hong Kong Designers Association, in the open-air lobby of the Hongkong Shanghai Bank. It was very special because on the one hand it was quite exciting to visit an open-air exhibition of Communications Design at night. On the other hand I was totally amazed at the high quality of the exhibits, especially of the posters of one designer whose name I couldn't keep in mind.

The next day I told Henry Steiner about my late night visit and asked him for this great talent. "Do you know him?" (What a question!) "He is one of Hongkong's best designers and well-known worldwide." (My fault.) Two years later I had the chance to get to know him during a meeting in the "Goethe-Institut".

Kan Tai-keung is as nice as his work, a very rare combination, the unusual unit of person and work.

Now I have to admit that there is a kind of intercontinental affinity between his and mine, he at the beginning of the world me at the end – or vice versa.

It's the way of designing – familiar to him and me – based on the interrelation between head and hand, shaping the simple, the gesture.

Chinese history of arts, especially the tradition of ink-painting for hundreds and thousands of years, is born again in the work of Kan Tai-keung. His typography is a sign of highest quality.

The way he uses icons and text is defined by a great intimacy with aesthetic principles. This mastery – as an expression of culture – will be regarded highly even in the distant future.

His works are thoughts that take shape in the fog of art. They divide and fuse the unexpected.

If God has been an Artist – as we might think of him – then the graphic and typographic works of Kan Tai-keung are monads. Or the lowest common multiple that we, taking it off, may expect on our journey...

Uwe Loesch
Germany, 1997



約兩年前藉著一次在日本大阪舉行展覽會的機會，我第一次認識了亞洲的面貌。在那年代裏，我幾乎已經走遍全球。但這次遠東之旅，給了我一個在香港長期逗留的機會。

我當時沒想到會遇到那位對這個神秘城市設計，最有代表性的人物。想不到，一年之後，在一個很偶然的機會，我與靳先生在深圳見面，那時剛好我應《中國平面設計比賽》之邀請，去深圳作評判。我當時心裏有種很奇怪的感覺，彷彿我是與他認識已久的朋友。我從那天開始，就知道我和他之間不論是對藝術、生活的看法都大同小異。靳先生是屬於那種把生活和藝術創作，融會在一起的藝術家。這兩者互相交流，並建立了一些緊密互存的聯繫。如果世界上存在著兩種設計家，其中一種是熱愛生活，而靳先生無疑是屬於這種人。

他不但待人熱情，而且是一位偉大的藝術家，是屬於那些懂得綜合外形和本質的藝術家。

由於他作品線條幽雅，外形精細，而兩者又配合得精密而恰當地表達中心思想，他更發展出一套非常強烈而準確的表達

方法。因為設計工作最難的地方，在於一個概念的調和，這個概念的實現和構圖，使文字和形象相關比例均衡，從而構成一個準確表達意念的整體。靳先生不但在他整體創造上達到了這一點，而且還達到了只屬於大藝術家風範的一體性形象。因為，他的創造，雖然是深深地烙上中國文化的印記，但卻對西方人有啟發作用。我從這一點能看出，這就是藝術為不同文化、不同種族的民族，加強與加深彼此了解和器重的証據。然而，靳先生的作品最使我入迷的地方，在於它形象純樸，沒有任何的不自然地方和多餘的細節、他的技藝都在於使用最簡單的方法精煉地表達要點，但又決不令人覺得泛味或平淡的感覺。

白色是他經常選用在海報上的底色，白色的底色不但充滿詩意，而且加強與顏色的對比，而每一種顏色卻又是精心挑選的，都附著特別的含意。這一點在一張環保海報上尤其分明，其海報上看見一塊受了傷的石頭。意思清楚明確表達出來。不過，大家不要誤解、他的技藝之所以能達到那麼爐火純青的地步，是因為他懂得摘取自己文化所遺留下來的果實（雖然我並不是那麼喜歡用果實兩字），而且懂得超越他自己的文化。

他懂得結合傳統與現代特色，不顧其他的潮流和一些這幾年很時興的虛浮畫風。他保留原來的身份、文化，加上接受外來的影響，就是他最好的創造與創新方法。然而，靳先生並不為他的知名度而感到滿足，他還努力培養新血，推廣藝術，這才是他最大功德之處。他有一種利他主義精神。這種精神使一些藝術家變成慷慨、和睦的人，而且有待人如己的心。這些藝術家因此為我們生命帶來更多光彩。

在此感謝靳先生。

Michel Bouvet

法國，1997



Ma rencontre avec l'Asie ne date que de deux ans, à l'occasion d'une exposition à Osaka, au Japon. J'avais jusqu'alors parcouru le monde dans d'autres sens mais ce voyage vers l'est (depuis la France) me donna alors l'opportunité de faire une escale prolongée à Hong Kong.

Je n'aurais jamais imaginé pouvoir rencontrer celui qui, à mes yeux, représentait le mieux le design de cette ville mythique. Pourtant, le hasard fit qu'un an plus tard l'occasion se présenta puisque Kan se rendit à Shenzhen où j'étais moi-même invité au jury de «Graphic Design in China». J'eus alors la curieuse impression que nous nous connaissions déjà. Je sais, depuis, que nos façons d'approcher l'art et la vie ne sont pas si éloignées l'une de l'autre. Kan fait partie de ces artistes qui mélangeant joyeusement la vie et l'activité créatrice: elles s'interpénètrent et permettent d'établir ces relations qui ne pourraient exister l'une sans l'autre. Il m'est agréable de pouvoir dire ici que, s'il existe parmi les designers deux catégories, les bons vivants et les autres, Kan appartient sans aucun doute, à la première.

Mais, s'il est chaleureux, il est aussi un grand artiste, de ceux qui savent faire la synthèse entre le fond et la forme. L'élégance du trait, la précision des formes se mettent toujours au service d'une idée, lui permettant ainsi de se développer vers une expression encore plus forte et plus juste. Car, au fond, toute la difficulté de ce métier consiste à mettre en harmonie un concept, et par là-même, sa réalisation, une relation texte-image équilibrée et un certain sens de la composition afin d'aboutir à un ensemble qui vise juste. Hors, non seulement Kan y parvient dans la totalité de son œuvre, mais, de plus, il atteint une forme d'universalité qui est la marque des grands artistes. Car, son travail, profondément empreint de culture chinoise, nous parle aussi, à nous, européens ; et j'y vois là la preuve que l'art renforce formidablement l'estime et la compréhension entre des peuples d'origine et de culture fort différentes.

Néanmoins, les images de Kan me fascinent particulièrement par leur simplicité apparente: ici, point d'artifices ou de détails superflus. Tout son art consiste à épurer et à signifier l'essentiel dans une grande économie de moyens, qui n'est jamais synonyme de froideur ou d'aridité. Le fond blanc, très souvent employé dans ses affiches, y trouve une grande expression poétique et renforce de manière significative les couleurs dont l'utilisation reste parcimonieuse car toujours empreinte d'une signification spécifique. Cela apparaît particulièrement sensible dans cette image d'une pierre blessée, pour une affiche sur la protection de la nature. Ici, tout est dit et bien dit. Mais ne nous y trompons pas : si nous constatons dans son art cette faculté extraordinaire de Kan à s'exprimer de manière à la fois si concentrée et si sensible, c'est que celui-ci a su faire fructifier (même si je n'aime guère ce mot) son propre héritage culturel et bien souvent le dépasser. Il a su allier tradition et modernité, en dépit des modes et autres vanités graphiques largement répandues dans le monde depuis quelques années. Préserver son identité, sa culture, tout en s'ouvrant aux autres reste certainement le meilleur moyen d'inventer, voire même d'innover.

Pourtant Kan ne se contente pas seulement d'être un artiste reconnu et fêté mais, et ce n'est pas le moindre de ses mérites, consacre une partie importante de son temps et de son énergie à la promotion et à l'éducation du design. Il y a, chez lui, cette forme d'altruisme qui fait de certains artistes des êtres généreux, en harmonie avec eux-mêmes et les autres. Ils contribuent par là même à nous rendre la vie plus belle. Qu'il en soit ici remercié.

Michel Bouvet
France, 1997

The first time I made acquaintance with Asia was about two years ago when I had the opportunity to hold an exhibition in Osaka, Japan. In that period, I traveled around nearly the entire globe. But this trip to the Far East gave me the opportunity to stay in Hong Kong for a long period. At that time I never imagined that I would meet the most representative figure for design in this mysterious city. I never imagined that one year later, by an off chance, I would meet Mr. Kan in Shenzhen. I had just accepted an invitation to be a judge at the "China Graphic Design Competition". At that time I had the strangest feeling. It was as though he were a friend I had known for a long time. Starting on that day I have learned that whether it's views on art or on life, we have very much in common. Mr. Kan is one of those kind of artists who fuses life and artistic creation. These two have mutual interflow and some close mutual existence and

contact is built up. If there are two kinds of designers in the world and one kind are those who love life, without doubt Mr. Kan is one of that kind. Not only is he very warm in his relations, he is also a great artist. He is one of those artists who understand how to integrate form and essence. Through the elegant line and meticulous form of his works, and their interrelation to express the central idea with precision and felicity, he has developed a mode of expression that has great intensity and precision. The greatest difficulty in design work is mediation of a concept. The concept's realization and structure cause the written words and the image to have a balanced relative proportion thereby comprising a whole that faithfully expresses the idea. Mr. Kan not only achieves this in his overall creative work, he also achieves a unity of image that belongs only to the manner of great artists. The reason is that though his works are branded very deeply with the mark of Chinese culture, they are also an inspiration to Westerners. I can see from this proof that art strengthens and deepens mutual understanding and

regard between people of different cultures and races.

Nevertheless, the aspect of Mr. Kan's works that fascinates me the most is the simplicity of the image. There is no part that is not natural. There is no superfluous detail. His technique is to use the simplest method to express the main point in a trenchant way. But this emphatically does not give one a vague or flat feeling. White is the background color he often uses for posters. A white background is not only poetic, it heightens the contrast with the other colors. Every color is chosen with the greatest care and carries special meaning. This is especially evident in an environmental protection poster. In this poster one sees an injured stone. The meaning is expressed very clearly. But there should be no misunderstanding — the reason his artistic technique could reach this degree of mastery is that he knows how to take the fruit handed down by his own culture (though I don't really like to use the word "fruit"). And he knows how to go beyond his own culture.

He knows how to synthesize traditional and modern characteristics. Other trends and some empty and superficial styles that have been fashionable in recent years do not matter to him. He preserves his original identity and culture. This and his acceptance of outside influences are his greatest method of creation and innovation. Nevertheless, Mr. Kan is not satisfied with his fame. He continues to train new talent and to promote art. This is his greatest contribution and virtue. He has the spirit of helping others. This spirit causes some artists to become people who are generous and harmonious with a heart to treat others as themselves. These artists have inevitably brought more splendor to our lives.

Here, I would like to thank Mr. Kan.

Michel Bouvet
France, 1997

現今世界設計，最令人振奮但又最令人惋惜的，便是電腦影響了我們如何去欣賞世界各地的設計。我們過於著重電腦科技的應用，讓這種表達形式泛濫起來。我們作為設計師的一分子，必須不斷創新，看到靳先生的作品，以手作表達比電腦效果來得更出眾，令人耳目一新。他的海報作品尤其具有思想感情，予人和諧協調的感覺，而且充滿傳統氣色。其獨特風格，在其它一流的海報設計中作一席位。他的作品不但具有當代色彩，而且表現出濃厚的東方味道。然而它不只是單純表現美的一面，而是更恰當地，有美感地把設計藝術作為了一種溝通工具。

在一個瞬息萬變的國度裏，看到傳統平面設計與現今科技世界能夠和諧共處，的確令人喜出望外。在世界當代的海報設計中，靳先生的作品可真別樹一幟。

Ken Cato
澳洲，1997



One of the most exciting yet sad features of the design world today is the affect that computers have had on the techniques being used to interpret design projects the world over.

It seems we have been fascinated with the technology and allow the style to drive everything. In a profession that aspires to always produce something new, it is refreshing to see the work of Kan Tai-keung, where hand made expressions stand out from mechanised techniques.

The work embodies a wonderful sense of spirit, harmony and tradition and at the same time sits comfortably amongst today's best posters. While the work is obviously contemporary it displays obvious oriental characteristics, they are not used for their own sake, but are very much a part of the communication and absolutely appropriately and artistically applied. In a country where change has never been more evident. It is wonderful to see the colour-graphic tradition live in harmony with the digital world of today. The posters of Kan Tai-keung hold a distinctive position in the world of the contemporary poster.

Ken Cato
Australia, 1997

나-는-자는-데- 쓰-는-서-는-데-는-데-
 대-는-라-는-데-는-데-는-데-는-데-는-데-는-
 藤-蘆-로-는-데-나- 7-1-22-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-
 가-는-中-國-사-례- 예-마-부-의-마-를-
 아-는-아-마-마-마-마-마-마-마-마-마-
 고-가-마-마-마-마-마-마-마-마-마-
 라-마-는-마-는-마-는-마-는-마-는-
 언-제-나- 그-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-
 칸-수- . 칸-나-이- 1997.09.20

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