

MOENTAINI AND BEYOND

The Architectonics of Kan & Lau

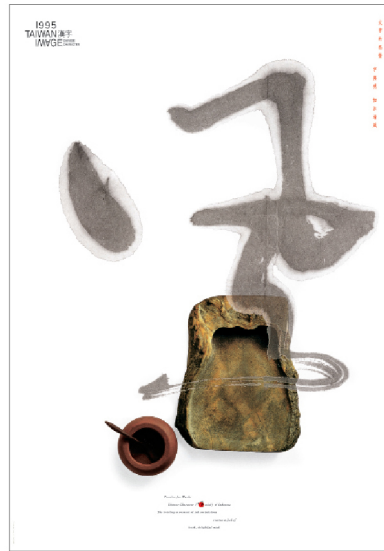
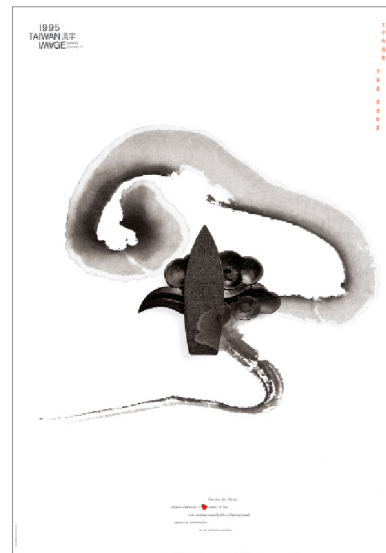


THE TERMINOLOGY 'ARCHITECTONICS' AS USED IN ARCHITECTURE APPLIES TO THE MANIPULATION OF ARCHITECTURAL FORM AND SPACE IN A MEASURED AND REASONED WAY. WHEN GRAPHICALLY REPRESENTED ON FLAT SURFACES, THE ARCHITECTONICS OF ARCHITECTURE CAN BE THOUGHT PROVOKING, AND EVEN STIMULATING IF THE GRAPHICS ARE SKILLFULLY EXECUTED. IT IS IN THE FLAT REPRESENTATION OF ARCHITECTONICS THAT ARCHITECTURE MEETS WITH GRAPHICS.

BY NGIOM

The terminology 'architectonics' as used in architecture applies to the manipulation of architectural form and space in a measured and reasoned way. When graphically represented on flat surfaces, the architectonics of architecture can be thought provoking, and even stimulating if the graphics are skilfully executed. It is in the flat representation of architectonics that architecture meets with graphics.

Conversely, graphics can likewise meet architecture through the world of 'architectonics', that is, by provoking architectural thoughts. The practice of Hong Kong based graphics designers Kan & Lau inadvertently carried architectonic messages in their graphic themes.



Kan Tai-Keung even used the measuring rule among his graphic themes. However, the genesis of his use of scales came from his previous discipline as a tailor – it follows the adage that you cannot escape your past; being etched in the fabric of your memory. In an interview, Kan reminisced of spending his leisure time roaming the flea market to pick up scales from all over the world.

His collection of scale rules are used as collages, which juxtapose with his mastery of calligraphy, creating a sense provoking juxtaposition of two different media. Together, they became the play of opposites – the hard mainly wooden scale rules and delicate brush strokes to provide graphic compositions that could have easily gone all awry under a less skilful hand.

Other than scales, Kan also juxtaposes the brush strokes against other materials. The real intention is to create graphic compositions, therefore it does not matter in the end what materials are used to juxtapose with the brush strokes, as long as a poetic contrast is arrived at.

There is always 'form' in graphic art, and there is always composition; but the aspect about Kan's art that really stands out is its spatial quality, and it is mostly in this aspect that the works have affinity with the idea of architectonics. The works are also unique to him as the calligraphic brush strokes are unique to the individual. And in this sense, the works are more art than representational graphics.

Kan's partner, Freeman Lau Siu Hong is even more architectural with the architectonics, particularly, with the variety of arrangement of forms that could be arrived at with the play of chairs. His play of chairs carries deep psychological meanings for the observers, as chairs are associated with everyday use and with it, memories. For example, every house and every building anywhere has chairs – new chairs, old chairs, uncomfortable chairs, ugly chairs or even beautiful ones.





The way the chairs are crafted, particularly in the way they are interlocked through tongue and groove joints, verge on product design, but the end products are unusable objects of provocation rather than that of useful designs. The detail and craftsmanship that went into making useless objects are quite rigorous, requiring high level of joinery skills – all that for procuring beautiful objects of provocation. ●

