

**UK Trade & Investment  
China Design Task Force  
Quadro Coverage**

**CHINA**

**July 2008**

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## Synopsis of Quadro coverage

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### **Synopsis**

#### **Managing Design with Precision**

*The common conception that design is only really about styling and aesthetics is changing. More and more clients are bringing ideas, clarity and understanding to businesses, helping them to understand those factors which determine their future.*

Quadro is an international product design and development company, providing consultancy advice on product creation, realisation and implementation and actively delivers solutions with 'hands on' design projects. A 'learning by doing' approach ensures clients gain valuable knowledge and skills. Their clients include Pyrex, AT&T.

#### **Experience of Sensibility Design**

Quadro is taking a much keener approach and interest in the execution of the total product design. As the 'devil is in the detail', Quadro takes the responsibility to 'police' a design right through the development process – the products are invariably a success. Pushing the engineering and manufacturing envelope is a part of the innovative process: finding new, better and cheaper ways to make a product, choosing new materials, changing paradigms and traditions.

Recent research by Arc International Cookware, owner of the Pyrex brand, revealed a new desire among consumers in Europe for a 'design' in kitchenware.

Today's consumer has choice. More and more the choices of the future will not be between different product features, but will be more between different emotional worlds – the 'softer' issues; desire, status, ownership, service. A blurring of the boundaries between brands, design, function, performance, service.

Being able to experience the emotional responses to ideas and measure their acceptance will allow even more experimentation with alternative ideas. Making the virtual world available to end users so they can share in a concept experience is the goal. This has been achieved in some areas, like automotive, aerospace, and architecture.

#### **Consumer Involved Design**

Consumer involvement aids to the development of product practicality. This is best illustrated by the creation of 3DVIA. Recognising that it is no longer

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acceptable to design a product without involving the consumer in the experience, DS (Dassault Systemes, a Quadro client) came out with 3DVIA, a brand for online life-like virtual experiences. With 3DVIA, consumers play a role in product creation to realise their 'perfect' products. It establishes 3D as a mass media for consumers and professional communities, allowing anyone to imagine, create, play and experience consumer products and services used in our daily lives through online services. It opens the door to the world our imagination creates.

Design is changing in our daily life. Not surprisingly then, the way products are designed is changing too, as are the designers responsible for creating new products. As design becomes a key differentiator, the role of the designer is changing.

According to Quadro, design is becoming a vital strategic tool in a business with challenges to innovate and create the future. This new, highly responsible strategic role requires a more demanding designer who is passionate about the end user, a custodian of consumer interest, an innovator and co-coordinator with conviction and drive to make it happen.

Philip Gray, the Managing Director of Quadro Design Associates, said the next highly competitive product innovation is likely to come from the most creative resource in the business. Many global corporations have recognized this in the last decade and have increased the number of designers on their teams and are using external agencies to ensure the constant refreshment of ideas. In South Korea, both Samsung and LG dramatically increased their design resources and set up studios around the world to gain the essential insights into different cultures, habits and behaviours of consumers.

Recognition of strategic design is the main factor that determines Apple and Sony's successful occupancy in international markets. The common conception that design is only really about styling and aesthetics is changing. More and more clients are bringing ideas, clarity and understanding to businesses, helping them to understand those factors which determine their future - whether that's design trends, technological futures, consumer needs, market potential or the competitive context- all of which are needed to precisely frame the eventual strategic design brief.

### **Needs of Designers**

As design becomes an increasingly significant strategic component in business, Quadro designers strive to be the innovators and interpreters of consumer needs into tangible, desirable products. The ability to explore, discover and create ideas very quickly, discuss them with stakeholders, modify them, make models, test and re-model before finally presenting a finished solution are no longer 'nice to haves', but are essentials.

Quadro hopes to see different kinds of tools that focus on concept creation that also reflect a simple and easy interface. That way, designers can share their ideas with other engineers, production specialists, marketing and sales staff and align with cost estimators in earlier phases, making up the foundation of any company.

**Some materials were provided by UK Trade and Investment**

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## Synopsis of China Design Taskforce coverage

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### Synopsis

#### **Industrial Design: Achieving Marketable Success**

The China Design Taskforce, organized by UK Trade and Investment, aims to share knowledge and best practices of industrial design to the China market. Armed with notable design successes, the members of the taskforce, from renowned design companies across the UK, are sharing insights and experiences with Chinese industrial designers. Spokespeople from taskforce companies LOEWY, Quadro and Tangerine shared their thoughts with us.

#### **Good design, Bad design**

#### **Can you give an example of the implication and impact of 'good design' opposed to 'bad design'?**

**LOEWY:** The 'Top 100 brands' are selected by Interbrand every year, whose results are amazingly congruent, showing conclusively that good design is good business! On the other side, the cost of bad design is commercial failure!

**Quadro:** I've experienced many examples which reflect that 'design' is still seen as styling – only what the product looks like. Often Styling Trends are copied without understanding their rationale. Good design is the result of a deep understanding of both consumer and business needs. Bad design occurs because companies don't spend sufficient time and money on understanding their customers and designers are often isolated and think their job is just to make a product look good, regardless of its suitability to meet a need.

**Tangerine:** One of the clearest examples of the value of good design is the Club World sleeper seat we designed for British Airways (BA). The investment to develop the new seat to market was in the region of £200 million. A robust design process resulted in a product with significant operating cost benefits to the airline and increased desirability to customers. As a result of good design the product recovered BA's investment in less than a year and is the profit engine of their business.

**The Rolls-Royce, Mini Cooper and Concorde aircraft have each left a deep impression of UK design to the world. In your view, what are some of the milestones marking the history of UK's design industry? In terms of creativity and specific elements, what could be extracted for inspiration for Chinese designers?**

**LOEWY:** For me, design milestones are not about this or that product, but more about longer term strategic influences which have enabled UK design. I would point to the Great Exhibition in Victorian times, the post-war Festival of Britain, the founding of The Design Council over 50 years ago, the development of our design education system, and our thriving design infrastructure (D&AD, DBA etc). If Chinese designers are looking for inspiration, their first port of call should be the D&AD Annuals which capture the highest quality creative work across a range of disciplines.

**Quadro:** The three examples represent luxury (Rolls Royce), performance (Mini Cooper) and supersonic (Concorde). They are also examples of the UK strength in transport design. We continue to produce high quality design for aircraft cabins, trains, trucks and cars.

Two non transport examples of milestone designs are the Anglepoise table lamp and the McLaren baby buggy. The Anglepoise is a task lamp allowing the user to adjust the lamps position without the need for any controls or clamps – it's counterbalanced. This means that when working, the lamp is easily moved to whatever position is required, whether it be desk based work, a professional like a dentist or just for leisure reading. The key element was recognizing a user need and satisfying it in the simplest possible way.

## **New Economy and Design**

**In terms of establishing a brand, are there any traditional manufacturing companies in the UK re-inventing or re-building itself?**

**Quadro:** In the UK, such traditional manufacturing companies will actively look for assistance and cooperation chances from institutions such as the Design Council, to stimulate sales and export.

Triumph is a well established UK brand making motorcycles. In the 60's they saw their business decline as the Japanese brands dominated the global market. But with a recognized brand and loyal customers the business was rejuvenated in the 90's with the introduction of a range of well designed life-style machines to appeal to the growing band of older riders.

## **Design and Sustainable development**

**New, groundbreaking designs are changing the world and the way we think, especially about the environment. How is this focus on sustainable development influencing the creative industries?**

**LOEWY:** Sustainable thinking is substantially influencing new products and services. The fact is that the population is becoming increasingly interested and knowledgeable about sustainable issues, and they are becoming a factor in their purchase decisions. So 'Green is Good Business' too! And that's forcing the pace of change.

**Quadro:** It is difficult for companies to reconcile product design for older people with the apparent excitement of designing for the young and trendy

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community. We are designing products for the older population right now. It is the social responsibility that designer should bear. Our consumer research in Europe has shown that the primary concerns are with safety, security and the environment. These concerns can, should and will be the stimulus for the next wave of innovation.

**Tangerine:** For 14 years we have been involved with projects that have had a sustainable design requirement set out in the brief. Usually the focus has been on cultural sustainability through social inclusion.

In 2006 Tangerine created Product Design Guidelines for TFL (Transport for London), the company that operates London's entire public transport network. The lifecycle, environmental impact, aesthetics and economic criteria were of equal importance when identifying what should be considered successful sustainable design for TFL.

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### **Synopsis**

#### **Successful Design: The Dialogues of English Creatives**

*New taskforce set up by UK Trade and Investment will be working closely with Chinese companies to facilitate information flow and support those looking to pursue international growth through enhanced design capabilities.*

#### **Simplicity is often the hardest to achieve**

*Answers by Phil Gray, Managing Director of Quadro*

**Q: “If you think good design is expensive you should look at the real cost of bad design”, Michael Richard, the new chairman of the Design Council. Do you recall specific examples in your experience in Asian and the Chinese market that reflect this comment? If you were the designer in these cases, how would you rectify the downfalls?**

**A:** I've experienced many examples which reflect that 'design' is still seen as styling – only what the product looks like. Styling trends' are often copied without understanding their rationale. Good design is the result of a deep understanding of both consumer and business needs. Bad design occurs because companies don't spend sufficient time and money on understanding their customers and designers are often isolated and think their job is just to make a product look good, regardless of its suitability to meet a need. This situation can be rectified by involving designers in the total new product development process. Good design starts with asking many challenging questions! You need to know the right questions to ask.

**Q: The Rolls-Royce, Mini Cooper and Concorde aircraft have each delivered a deep impression of UK design to the world. In your view, what are some of the milestone designs marking the history of UK design? In terms of creativity and specific elements, what could be extracted for inspiration for Chinese designers?**

**A:** The three examples represent luxury (Rolls Royce), performance (Mini Cooper) and supersonic (Concorde). Two non transport examples of milestone designs are the Anglepoise table lamp and the McLaren baby buggy.

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The Anglepoise is a task lamp allowing the user to adjust the lamps position without the need for any controls or clamps – it's counterbalanced. This means that the working the lamp is easily moved to whatever position is required, whether it be desk-based work, for a professional like a dentist or just for leisure reading. The key element was recognizing a user need and satisfying it in the simplest possible way. The second example is the McLaren baby buggy. This completely changed the landscape of baby equipment. McLaren recognised the need for a one hand operated light weight folding push chair that was easily used by mums. It was very maneuverable with all wheels steering, a simple canvas seat for the baby. Its launch onto the market in the late 60's established a new design principle which many have copied since. The essential element was recognizing a need for a very simple means for transporting young children.

Simplicity is often the hardest feature to achieve. It's much easier to be complicated!

**Q: Design, at present, is not only focusing on products and communication, but also on the qualified services the company delivers. In terms of service and client care, do you think Chinese companies need to reform service design? What role should design play in this process? What has the UK done in the past?**

**A:** Design, in this context, should not be considered as an isolated discipline. Now design and product development is all about collaborative working – designing the total consumer experience. Not just the product but all the things that go around it; packaging, website, marketing material. Also companies that invest heavily in design make sure that all functions support each another. For example if you visit a BMW showroom, the products, the staff, the service is consistent wherever you go in the world.

Some of us are helping companies think differently using 'design thinking methodology' which embraces the whole product life cycle. All of our thinking revolves around deep understanding of consumers – how they perceive things, how they use them, how they value them. With increasing choices for the consumer to decide on, we must have a good understanding. Do we fulfill a need or create a need? In either case we must know what consumers expectations are in the context of the environments in which they live.

**Q: How is sustainable development influencing the creative industries? How is design influencing economic development from a social perspective (i.e. designing for an ageing population)?**

**A:** We are designing products for the older population right now! Once again understanding user needs and what the key issues are is the recipe for successful business. Sometimes it's difficult for companies to reconcile product design for older people with the apparent excitement of designing for the young and trendy community. But the reality is that the desire and enthusiasm is just as great with the baby boomers as with the young, the only difference is that the senses are fading. So controls are more difficult to operate, graphics are more difficult to see, but there is no dampening of an interest in style.

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We can influence but we also have to accept the dynamics of the business world and may not win all the arguments. Quadro has designed to meet the tough environmental requirements which exist in Germany. We now think about the whole product life cycle – from birth to death.

Our consumer research in Europe has shown that the primary concerns are with safety, security and the environment. These concerns can, should and will be the stimulus for the next wave of innovation.