

FOR THE GREENER GOOD

Business of Design Week 2023 brought together some of the world's foremost design masters, brand leaders and entrepreneurs for its annual event to form the basis of a more sustainable and environmentally-conscious future

While conversation around sustainability in design has grown exponentially in the past years, action is still far too slow. That's why "Game Changers" was the theme of this year's Business of Design Week (BODW), an annual meeting organised by Hong Kong Design Centre (HKDC) of influential creative leaders that aims to drive innovation that pushes the industry towards a greener future.

"BODW 2023 will gather over 50 international, regional and local creative leaders for an inspiring week-long programme across the city. Among them, we have already confirmed heavyweight speakers for the BODW summit especially from the Mainland and ASEAN countries," said the chairman of HKDC, Professor Eric Yim, at a press conference leading up to the event. "This enables us to showcase the development of Chinese culture and creativity through design to a wide international audience. It also helps us fulfil our key roles under the 14th Five-Year Plan and align with the strategy of the HKSAR government."

Partnering with the Netherlands and CreativeNL – a global pioneer of circular design – alongside Create Hong Kong



(CreateHK) as the lead sponsor and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) as the co-organiser, BODW presented an array of programmes, headlined by its flagship BODW 2023 Summit, which ran from November 29 to December 1 at Freespace of the West Kowloon Cultural District. Comprised of thought-provoking keynotes, power



talks and panel discussions, the summit featured three main pillars of topic: Urban Planning and New Urban Models; Transformative Brands and Consumers' Experience; and AI, Technology and Future Trends.

"The Netherlands is proud to be partnering with Hong Kong in a year-long exchange programme around the business environment, sustainable fashion, and products and brand-new design to forge long-term international cooperation, promote the exchange of ideas and knowledge, and co-create innovative solutions for current and future challenges," said Arjen van den Berg, the consul general of the Netherlands.

Anna Cheung, the director of service promotion at HKTDC who finds the circular-design-focused BODW to align with DesignInspire's core value of sustainability, continued: "As the co-organiser of the Business of Design Week conference for more than two decades, the HKTDC is delighted to create synergy with the event through our flagship creativity promotion, DesignInspire. I am confident that this year's BODW infused with Dutch creativity will be a major success."

To kick off proceedings, Chan Kwok-ki, chief secretary for administration of the HKSAR, highlighted the importance of fostering international partnerships as an international city where East meets West. Barbera Wolfensberger, director-general of culture and media at the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, noted the value of collective action. "Irrespective of the distance between the city of Hong Kong and the Netherlands in terms of miles, we face the same challenges in the transition to a circular economy," she said. "We are convinced that by joining forces, sharing our knowledge and inspiring each other, together we can initiate global change."

The first keynote of the summit was delivered by Ben van Berkel, the visionary architect and founder and principal architect of UNStudio, who explored the very essence of positive innovation and how continuous transformation comes to life in projects like the eagerly anticipated Lyric Theatre in Hong Kong and the stunning STH BNK by Beulah in Melbourne. Later that afternoon, Kenya Hara, the president and chief executive designer of Nippon Design Center, shared his principles on aesthetics



and their practical implications in addressing Japan's evolving challenges, from rapid urbanisation to an ageing population, elaborating on how design can serve as a catalyst for crafting a sustainable future, not only for Japan but for the world at large.

Sessions the next day focused on transformative brands and the consumer experience, with José Teunissen and Cai Jinqing, director and professor at Amsterdam Fashion Institute, and president of Kering Greater China, respectively, offering their take on navigating the complexities of approaching a circular economy for luxury. From supply chains and sustainable sourcing of materials to promoting responsible consumption, the duo delved into the innovative solutions and strategies needed to embrace sustainability. "Designing the Future of Luxury Hospitality" led by Teo Su Seam, partner at LTW Designworks; Jill Goh, general manager of The Landmark Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong; and Ed Ng, co-founder of AB Concept; was another insightful panel discussion.

On the final day of the summit, Dr Wang Jian, founder of Alibaba Cloud, spoke of the transformative power AI and City Brain hold in reshaping urban life, as well as the role of artificial intelligence in enhancing the liveability and experiential quality of our cities. Then, just ahead of the closing remarks, a panel of experts featuring vice president of Group Lotus, Yao Yingjia, and the head of innovation at Porsche China, Janice Tsang, dived into the rapidly transforming EV industry and conferred on the future of mobility through pioneering design-driven solutions and user-centric strategies.

All in all, BODW 2023 proved to be a profoundly enriching experience for all attendees. Leveraging Hong Kong's status as a global hub, the event gathered an international group of like-minded individuals who will no doubt contribute to the betterment of a sustainable design industry.