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Artistic Collaboration with China Brings “Chopsticks & Forks” to Laguna College of Art & Design

Laguna College of Art & Design enthusiastically announces the culmination of an international collaboration with the Communication University in China by launching concurrent exhibitions in Beijing and Laguna Beach. The *Chopsticks & Forks* sister exhibition in Laguna Beach will be held November 11 - December 19 at the college gallery located at 2222 Laguna Canyon Road.

The collaborative exhibition is the product of Professors Xun Chi, Xuefu Wu and Pat Vining of the participating colleges and invokes Graphic Design students to fuse multiple layers of meaning to communicate a metaphorical message that transcends language. This collaborative project was designed and led by professor Chi and involved insightful input from professors Wu and Vining with a shared purpose of supporting the artistic and creative communication between the east and the west.

Unlike most other international collaborations, which rarely go beyond comparing and contrasting artist's works, the most significant innovation of the Chopsticks & Forks project is its unique format of collaboration that successfully engaged the students of both cultures at a deeper level. Professor Chi purposefully designed the implementation of the project so that the participating students were required to challenge, communicate, exchange and collaborate as they completed the project. In other words, every piece of work generated from this project was truly a collaboration between students from both cultures.

One key concept of this project evolves around integrating method + material + metaphor in conveying meaning visually. This concept adopts a training method originally developed by Professor Wu in China, which centered on combining method and material to create innovative arts. Graphic Design professors Chi and Vining at LCAD then enhanced this concept by adding a metaphorical layer, enabling students to convey a more profound meaning that surpasses traditional type and image.

The first phase of the project involved students from both cultures being randomly assigned the method and material components. For each student, their task was to create an attractive image based on the given method and material. They then chose a metaphor and exchanged partially complete artwork with a counterpart. The second phase challenged the students to add another layer of visual elements including text and images to their counterpart's work in order to enhance, specify or even alter the metaphor and the meaning to complete the design. The objective was to challenge each other in the first phase and collaborate with each other during the second phase. The Chopsticks & Forks project led to three rounds of collaboration and generated over 100 finished works. Each work conveys metaphorical meaning and, through multiple layers of image and text, represents a unique hybrid of individual expression, cooperative partnership and cultural influence.

The goal is to create a future series of equally engaging projects to rival the success of Chopsticks & Forks. “Both the students and the faculty were thrilled with the outcome, and I am seeking similar

projects in Japan, Korea and Europe,” said Professor Chi. “In the future, I hope to expand the concept and curriculum to include multiple countries positioning LCAD as the focal point of a multi-cultural, worldwide collaboration.” Plans are also in the works to create a website and book that documents the evolution of the project to garner international attention and awareness.

Professor Chi endeavors to impart the message that artistic expression knows no language and has no borders. As the newest addition to the Graphic Design curriculum, this program will continue to encourage LCAD students to communicate verbally and visually across cultures as well as push themselves beyond traditional boundaries to solve complex problems using interesting methods, unexpected materials and universal metaphors.

Images:

Guo, Fangting & Lauren Cudney - method=fix; material=teacher; metaphor=transform

Ma, Sha & Kenneth Chan - method=morph; material=chocolate; metaphor=balance

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Laguna College of Art & Design is a private, not-for-profit college where outstanding artist-educators, visual arts programs, state-of-the-art facilities, and year-round exhibitions give fresh vision to Laguna’s extraordinary legacy in the visual arts. Founded in 1961, the college educates artists at all stages of their creative careers, offering Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees in Drawing and Painting, Graphic Design, Illustration, Game Art and Animation, and a Master of Fine Arts degree in painting.

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