



A conversation in black + white
on...

COLOUR

Photography by ANDREW J. LOITERTON
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Candice Chan



Kai-Yin Lo

In the first of an ongoing series, we ask two experts in their respective fields about the role this issue's theme – colour – plays in their chosen discipline. We talk to Candice Chan, founder and creative director of J. Candice Interior Architects, and Kai-Yin Lo, jewellery and accessories designer, art adviser and cultural historian, about the influence colour has on their lives and work.

“I don’t wear a lot of bright colours,” says Kai-Yin Lo. “But it is important to me. You can see that my jewellery is pretty colourful, but the shades tend to harmonise with clothes, going against the trend of a lot of fine jewellery designers who use the stones as the driving force.”

When Lo first began designing her own pieces in the 1970s in Hong Kong and the 1980s in New York, she blazed a trail, straddling the line between fine and costume jewellery. Incorporating antique trinkets, ancient jade and semi-precious stones, she almost single-handedly created a new jewellery genre, going on to design collections for many of the leading American department stores, including Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue and Bergdorf Goodman.

History and culture have always preoccupied Lo and today dominate her working life, although she still creates collections of her sought-after jewels around the philosophy of exploring balance and imbalance. “This gives freedom, greater self-expression and actually solves a lot of problems,” she says, referring to her use of one-of-a-kind antique elements and all-natural stones that are never easy to pair in pieces. “Pairing is artificial, and harmony and effect can be achieved by contrast and graduation.”

Lo practises what she preaches. She is wearing her own designs – a necklace that naturally sits off-centre and earrings of contrasting sizes and shapes. She even has on odd shoes; one sparkles in blue while the other glitters red. When Lo travels she takes with her only three single shoes, allowing more combinations but taking up less space in her luggage.

For interior designer Candice Chan, it is the use of accessories that brings colour to the fore in her own style. “I’ve explored different clothing and different accessories, and at the end of the day I think the simple, classic, elegant look works best for me, but I always pair it with shocking accessories or a handbag that might stand out from the whole outfit,” she explains. “What colour I do wear is mainly in my accessories.”

The way Chan dresses is a reflection of her design philosophy and mirrors her work at J. Candice Interior Architects, the Hong Kong interior design firm she founded in 2009 and continues to head. “When I design I always think of pursuing it as something timeless and elegant with a bit of a surprise. Those three elements together will always be the central focus when creating a space. Being classic and being elegant is very predictable – but at the same time if we add something surprising, or something shocking, it creates that wow factor,” says Chan, citing as an example a residential project where she incorporated shocking-pink wallpaper by renowned American interior designer Kelly Wearstler, adding a wild element to an otherwise classic design.

“Kelly Wearstler is definitely a designer who has influenced me,” says Chan. “She uses a lot of colours and is very bold. She used to be a graphic designer and has a different take on interior design. She uses a lot of patterns and a lot of different graphics and has some stunning wallpapers. I look to her to see how she mixes and matches colour.”

Lo’s influences are different. “I’m a designer who’s never had a design lesson,” she says. It was something that came naturally.

Lo didn’t grow up with art and instead studied European medieval history at Cambridge University in the UK. “I have always been good at history, but I suppose I’ve always had some artistic elements in me,” she says. “When my mother gave me my own room, I decorated it pretty well. I always had a knack for arranging and

designing things. Even at that time I made all the furniture, but of course I mixed it with antique items, so I suppose, somehow, somewhere it was there. But I owe it all to culture and history.”

Lo has always been informed by her studies, and it was Chinese history that would become her main inspiration – a subject she delved deeper into on returning to Hong Kong after university, and from which her first designs sprang. “I learnt about my own background, about Chinese history, through artefacts,” she says. “The traditional way of collecting in China is that you admire an object in itself and you share it with people who know about it, with connoisseurs. But I thought I wanted it to be part of my life. I wanted to live with the things I like, instead of having them as trophies. So why not wear them? That’s how I started.”

Chan always knew she wanted to be part of the creative world. “My father is in the food and beverage industry and he would take me with him to inspect empty sites,” she says. “He would ask me to imagine what I would do with a space, to create a restaurant or a cafe out of it. So at a very young age – I think I was around 10 – I really got into design, especially interiors. What excited me was the ability to visualise things, to add colours and texture and lights and shadows into the whole space just by imagining it in my head. When I go into a space I see a layout, how people would travel around it. It’s something quite spectacular for me to be able to visualise that and then realise it.”

Chan’s mother also inspired her style. “In terms of aesthetic it was my mother who got me into learning different styles and the use of different materials and colours,” she says. “She’s quite bold. I remember one day I came home from school and she had painted the whole dining room yellow, just because she felt like it.”

Both Chan and Lo went from Hong Kong to America, Lo to New York to work at Time Inc, and Chan first to Syracuse University, where she studied interior design, and then to New York, where she worked revitalising a Broadway theatre. She also designed studios and offices for various multi-national corporations, and interiors for the well-known non-profit cultural institution and community centre 92Y.

It was in New York that Lo first thought of designing for a living. Inspired by her morning schlep past the stores of Fifth Avenue, one day she walked into Cartier during an open-house and sold her first collection. Her pieces filled a gap in the market.

“Gold jewellery was just too expensive and the lifestyle didn’t call for it,” says Lo. “People kept their jewels in the bank. There was this idea that jewellery was just precious. But jewellery is really part of life. Way back in history it always was. It’s ornamental.”

Working with colourful semi-precious stones, Lo began to create pieces based on her own desire to wear jewellery that was natural. “Jewellery then was fine or fake – those were the two big categories, with nothing in between.” As fashion writer Suzy Menkes wrote in the *International Herald Tribune* in 1992, Lo “bridged the gap between precious and fashion jewellery and set a new direction. She is a pioneer.”

Natural stones often meant muted hues, though the amber Lo found could be a vivid yellow, the ancient turquoise stones vibrant, and the tones of agate and jade she sourced were varied. “Muted colours have always attracted me, and I always preferred to use old things rather than pretty things,” she says, running her hands through a selection of necklaces she has brought along. “This is a piece of yellow jade, but I could only ever find one of everything. All of these, they never match, yet somehow they harmonise. It’s the same with colour. Balance need not match; it doesn’t need equilibrium. Whenever I worked with a fashion store they would ask me what the colour of the season was. I had to know but I couldn’t follow it because I had to find the stones. Whatever is in nature and is available, then that is for me.”

Colour has its place for Chan, too. “Colours pick up on different emotions. They trigger certain memories or feelings for people,” she says, and she incorporates it – through tiles, carpets, furniture and fabrics – into her own creations. Of working primarily in the commercial world, and often in the food and beverage industry, she says: “In terms of colours, I think commercial projects offer more room for creativity. These clients are more receptive to colour. When it comes to working in someone’s home, people are almost afraid of it.”

Always looking to add something surprising can be challenging in Hong Kong, where space is often at a premium, but colour can offer a good solution. “Sometimes colours are elements you can use to create that shock I look for. When you are working with a small space there aren’t always a lot of things you can do with the scale, the form or the structure, so colour is an easy way to bring that lightness into the space.”

While Chan is kept busy by her interior design projects, Lo is moving away from design and returning to her roots, and to history. “Now I only do exhibitions and I’ve gone back to being a cultural historian. It’s what I prefer, but the label of being a designer will stick with me.” She has edited a number of art, history and cultural books, is regularly called upon as a speaker and is a visiting principal lecturer on cross-culture at the prestigious Central Saint Martins art school in London. “I’m very selective in what I design now,” she says. “My designs are really to go with your way of life, your habitat. I always feel the design is really about enhancing life in yourself.”

在本期新增的專欄系列，我們訪問了室內設計公司 J. Candice Interior Architects 的創辦人陳浩寧，以及首飾及配飾設計師、藝術顧問兼文化歷史學者羅啟妍，與她們暢談本期的主題——色彩——如何影響她們的工作，以及在她們生活及工作中所扮演的角色。

「我很少穿鮮色的衣服，但顏色對我來說很重要，你也看到，我設計的首飾其實相當色彩豐富。不過，我會講求色彩與衣服的協調，不會像許多高級珠寶設計師那樣，視寶石為主角。」羅啟妍說。

1970及1980年代，羅啟妍分別在香港及紐約開始珠寶創作，她在行業裡另闢蹊徑，在高級及時尚首飾之間開創新的路線，將古董小飾物、古玉和其他半寶石等加入創作。她幾乎是獨力開拓了新的珠寶首飾體裁，其設計當時在Neiman Marcus、Sak’s Fifth Avenue和Bergdorf Goodman等美國大型百貨公司銷售。

羅啟妍的創作一直深受歷史及文化的影響，這份淵源今天甚至超越設計，成為她工作人生裡的重要部分。現時，她仍然以在失衡中尋找平衡的哲學來創作其廣受歡迎的首飾系列，並喜歡採用獨一無二的古董物品和全天然寶石，設計出難以配對成雙及平衡的作品。對此，她解釋：「這樣可以自由一點，更容易表達自己，可以解決許多問題。」

她續道：「成雙成對太過刻意，對比和漸進可達至和諧等效果。」羅啟妍言行一致，身上配戴自己設計的首飾，頸鏈的重心偏側在一邊，耳環無論大小和形狀都對比鮮明，就連腳上的鞋子也一藍一紅，相映成趣。羅啟妍旅行時也只會帶三隻鞋子，這樣可以配搭出更多組合，但又不必在行李箱佔用太多空間。

室內設計師陳浩寧身上的色彩也主要來自配飾，她說：「我試過不同的衣服和配飾，最終發現簡單和典雅的打扮最適合自己，但我通常會配搭一些大膽的飾物，或具畫龍點睛效果的手袋。我身上的顏色主要來自配件。」

陳浩寧於2009年在香港創立室內設計公司J. Candice Interior Architects，其打扮之道正正反映了她的設計理念及公司的工作方針。她表示：「我的設計一向包羅永恒、優雅而帶點驚喜這三大要素。典雅的設計通常都在意料之中，但如果加一點驚喜或大膽的設計，就可以令人感到喜出望外。」以公司旗下一個住宅項目為例，她採用美國室內設計師Kelly Wearstler的艷粉紅色牆紙，為典雅的設計添加狂野的元素。她說：「Kelly Wearstler對我影響甚深，她用色繽紛且十分大膽。曾從事平面設計的她，對室內設計有自己的一套，擅長用很多圖案和各種圖形，還設計了一些令人驚艷的牆紙。我喜歡向她學習顏色配搭的技巧。」

影響羅啟妍的卻不是某個人。她說：「我從沒念過設計課程。」這是與生俱來的才能。羅啟妍沒讀過藝術課程，她在英國劍橋大學修讀歐洲中古史，但她強調：「我的歷史成績一直很好，但我想我向來有點藝術天賦。家母曾經讓我佈置自己的房間，而我也

得心應手。我向來對佈置和設計有點天分，那次的家具也是我自己製作，再配搭古董物品。因此我想，我就是有這方面的才能，不過這得歸功於我的文化和歷史背景。」

羅一直透過學習汲取設計靈感，但最能啟發她的始終是中國歷史這個她自大學畢業回港後鑽研日深的課題，她的首個設計也因中國歷史而起。羅啟妍解釋：「我從文物中認識自己的背景和中國歷史。傳統的中國收藏方式是，你欣賞某物品，然後只會跟其他識貨之人或專家分享，但我想讓收藏品成為日常生活一部分，我想跟自己喜歡的東西一起生活，而不是把它們當戰利品。既然如此，何不穿戴它們？我就是這樣開始設計的。」

陳浩寧一直都知道自己喜歡設計創作，「家父從事餐飲業，他會帶我去巡視空置的地方，並問我如何將那些空間佈置成餐廳或咖啡店。因此我在小時候，約十歲左右，就開始接觸設計，特別是室內設計。能夠在腦裡為整個空間加上色彩、物料質感、燈光和陰影，構想整個效果，是最令人興奮的事。我走進一個空間就可以看到整個設計佈局，以及人在當中如何流動。能夠預視並實現自己的設計，感覺真的太棒了。」

跟羅啟妍一樣，陳浩寧的風格也深受母親所影響。「我對美學的認識來自家母，她讓我接觸各種風格，以及不同物料和顏色的運用。家母風格大膽，我記得有次放學回家發現她興之所至就把整個飯廳漆成黃色。」

陳浩寧和羅啟妍都先後離港赴美，羅啟妍進入紐約的時代集團工作，陳浩寧則進入Syracuse大學修讀室內設計。畢業後，陳來到紐約參與翻新百老匯劇院的項目，並曾為多家跨國企業設計工作室及辦公室，以及負責著名非牟利文化社區中心92Y的室內設計。

羅啟妍某天早上走過紐約第五大街的名牌商店時靈感乍現，首次考慮以設計為生。然後某天她走進正在舉行開放日的Cartier，賣出首個設計系列。其設計填補了當時市場上的空白。

她解釋：「當時黃金首飾太貴，又不合時宜，大家都把首飾放在銀行，那時珠寶首飾都是奢侈玩意。不過，首飾應該是日常生活一部分，歷史上一直如是，它們是裝飾品。」

羅啟妍喜歡配戴天然的東西，因此設計也採用色彩繽紛的半寶石。記者Suzy Menkes於1992年在《國際先驅論壇》談到羅啟妍時寫道：「其時的首飾不是很貴就是假的，涇渭分明，缺乏中間的選擇。她將珍貴與時尚的首飾連接起來，奠定新方向。她是先驅。」

天然石頭的顏色相對比較啞啞，但羅啟妍就是能找到鮮黃色的琥珀、色彩明亮的古綠松石，以及各種顏色的瑪瑙和玉石。「我一直喜歡啞啞顏色，也一直比較喜歡古物，對漂亮的東西反而不感興趣。」說時雙手輕撫著她帶來的幾條項鍊。「這是黃玉。每樣東西都只能找到一件，這些東西全都不相配，但卻能達到和諧效果。顏色也一樣，平衡不代表相配一致，也不必是均衡相稱。每次跟時裝店合作，他們都會問我當季流行的顏色，我當然知道，但卻不會盲目追隨，因為我首要是找石頭，而我只要找天然的石頭。」

陳浩寧同樣注重色彩，她說：「不同顏色代表不同情緒，能令人想起某種回憶或情感。」她會透過瓷磚、地毯、家具和布料等，為設計項目滲進一點色彩。她的客戶主要是商業機構，特別是餐飲企業，她表示：「在顏色運用方面，我想商業機構的項目有更大的發揮空間，他們對色彩較易接受，相反住宅項目的客戶則幾近抗拒。」

香港寸金尺土，想在設計中加點驚喜難乎其難，色彩反而是很好的解決辦法。「有時顏色可以做到我想要的驚艷效果。為細小空間設計時，很難在比例、形狀和結構上盡展所長，顏色便可以輕而易舉地令空間看來更明亮悅目。」

當陳浩寧繼續忙著其室內設計工作，羅啟妍已從設計回歸歷史本業。「我現時已重拾文化歷史學者的角色，只做首飾展覽，這是我的選擇，但設計師的身份會永遠跟著我。」她編了多本關於藝術、歷史和文化的書，並常常獲邀擔任演講嘉賓，以及在倫敦著名的中央聖馬丁藝術學院擔任跨文化課程的客座講師。她說：「我現時對設計工作非常揀擇，我希望設計能配合大家的生活方式和習慣，我一直覺得設計應以提升個人生活為目的。」■

Candice wears dress and leather jacket by RED Valentino at Harvey Nichols, LANDMARK ATRIUM; rings and earrings Candice’s own. Kai-Yin wears shirt by SAINT LAURENT, LANDMARK ALEXANDRA; dress by CARVEN, LANDMARK ATRIUM; coat by Burberry, LANDMARK ALEXANDRA; jewellery Kai-Yin’s own design. 陳浩寧穿著RED Valentino連身裙及皮外套，Harvey Nichols有售，置地廣場中庭；戒指及耳環由陳浩寧自備。羅啟妍穿著SAINT LAURENT恤衫，置地歷山；CARVEN裙子，置地廣場中庭；Burberry大衣，置地歷山；首飾由羅啟妍自備。