

退休女工x單親媽媽：一件布品連結兩代人 Retired Female Garment Worker X Single Mother: Bringing Two Generations Together with One Fabric Work

Made in Sample - Clive Sit

撰文 廖俊升



傳統工藝所蘊含的，不單是技術，還有文化，然而若沒有好好傳承，終有一日會煙消雲散。香港由六、七十年代的工業城市，變成今天商業都會，當時亞洲首屈一指的工藝又能否傳承下去？室內設計師薛文諾（Clive）在Good Seed社創基金的協助，籌辦「Made in Sample」計劃，邀請退休工廠女工向年輕單親媽媽傳授車衣技術，用環保物料為客戶縫紉布品，既可傳承技師的手藝，又可紓緩單親媽媽的經濟壓力。

Traditional craftsmanship embodies not only skills, but also culture. Passing on the artistry is essential or the skillsets will be lost to the sands of time. Hong Kong has evolved from a leading industrial city in Asia in the sixties and seventies into the financial metropolis of today. With the help of Good Seed's Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund, interior designer Clive started the project "Made in Sample". It invites retired female garment workers to teach single teenage mothers sewing and patchworks using environmentally friendly materials, hoping to pass on the craftsmanship skills as well as alleviating financial hardships for single mothers.

退休女工向年輕媽媽傳授技藝

起初他與聖雅各福群會合作進行一個回收及縫紉項目，回收到最多的物料是布板和紙，所以打算先做布藝和牆紙，找來了退休女工幫忙縫製。與此同時，他受朋友邀請到明愛中心，分享回收物料作設計用途的理念。「分享後知道明愛有團隊叫小腳板和風信子，兩個計劃都是幫年輕單親媽媽找工作。那時候突然想到，退休女工大多也是母親，能否將兩班人連結起來呢？」於是，「Made in Sample」的構思便誕生。

Clive：「香港七、八十年代，或者六、七十年代紡織業興盛，一班退休媽媽的技術甚至比其他地方的車衣工友都要好。既然有這個技術就要傳承，所以想如何將這些技術延續下去，又可以有收入。」Good Seed的理念是催化香港的社會創新，從而解決貧窮和社會孤立問題，締造社會效益。而為單親媽媽提供培訓和工作機會的「Made in Sample」，正正與Good Seed理念不謀而合；項目獲得基金撥款之後，計劃正式展開，由一位退休女工，帶領四至五位年輕單親媽媽，接工作單製作布品。



Using Recycled Materials to Make Fabric Works

The song that hails, “long live the factory girls; factories have smart girls aplenty,” has long gone out of style nowadays. Since the decline of the manufacturing industry in the eighties, Hong Kong has transitioned from a labour-intensive economy to a knowledge-intensive economy. Factory girls are now the career of a bygone era.

Although the occupation has disappeared, these retired female garment workers are still equipped with incomparable skills. However, if their craftsmanship was not passed down properly, it would slowly fade away in the end. In light of this, interior designer Clive decided to participate in the Good Seed program. He invited retired female garment workers to teach single teenage mothers sewing techniques. The project would take orders from clients and create fabric works using recycled materials. In this way, craftsmanship can be passed on and young mothers benefit from flexible working hours to spend more time with their children as well as supplement their income.

What is “Made in Simple”? When interior designers present their work to clients, they would attach a sample board to indicate the different kinds of fabrics that are required. Material suppliers would supply these fabrics, usually imported, and place them in a sample room. Most of these fabric samples were unused and unblemished, thus inspiring Clive to recycle and reuse. “We respect the aesthetics and value of the material, thereby differentiating it from the philosophy of up-cycling. We use the term sustainability, to highlight the inherent value of the fabric.”

Retired Female Worker Imparting Her Skills to Young Mothers

At first, Clive was working with St. James Settlement on a recycling and sewing project. Most materials they were able to collect were fabric samples and paper; so he decided to recruit retired female garment workers to make fabric works and wallpaper. At the same time, he was invited by a friend to the Caritas Centre to share his vision of recycling materials for design purposes. “After the sharing, I learnt that the Caritas has two support groups Green Baby Garden and Project Hyacinth, both aiming to assist young mothers in finding jobs. Retired female garment workers mostly being mothers too, I thought perhaps I could link up the two groups.” The concept of “Made in Sample” was thus born.

環保物料製作布品

「工廠妹萬歲，工廠內邊多多叻女」，今時今日，似乎已經沒有這支歌仔唱。本港工廠生產業自八十年代息微，由勞動密集型經濟轉為知識密集型經濟，工廠車衣女工這個職業，如今已經消失。

職業雖已消失，一眾退休車衣女工仍身懷絕技，但若無法好好傳承，亦只會慢慢失傳。有見及此，室內設計師Clive報名參加Good Seed社創計劃，邀請退休工廠女工向年輕單親媽媽傳授縫紉技術，同時接受客人訂單，再以環保物料製作布品。如此一來技藝得以傳承，年輕媽媽也可以取得收入，還因為工作不太忙，可以花多點時間陪子女。

何謂「Made in Sample」？室內設計師會見客人時，要呈上一塊sample board（樣板），告訴客人設計所需物料，同時供應商提供物料並放置於sample room，多屬全新並由外國進口。Clive看見有些物料沒有被用過，也未被弄髒，於是將之回收並重用，「尊重物料的美感和價值，所以有別於用upcycling（升級回收）這說法。我們通常用sustainability（可持續性），我們只是想將它的價值彰顯出來。」



Made in Sample維持小班形式運作，這既是小工廠，也是小家庭。「因為我都有教設計，其實愈少人愈教得好，反而多人就變工廠，現在少少地就好像一個小家庭。」Clive說，如今Made in Sample可以自然運作，「退休女工媽媽既可消磨時間，又可以傳承手藝。而她都視年輕媽媽為她的女兒，會打電話給她們聊天。她的人生經驗豐富，她們自己構成了小家庭，讓它自然發展都不錯。」

GoodSeed的理念是催化香港的社會創新，從而解決貧窮和社會孤立問題，締造社會效益。而為單親媽媽提供培訓和工作機會的「Made in Sample」，正正與GoodSeed理念不謀而合。

美學眼光不同 磨合前提是尊重自主

一如設計師的個性，設計、美感是他所長，溝通成為他遇上的難題，令本身有正職的Clive感到相當吃力。一個結合設計師、退休媽媽和年輕媽媽的小團隊，各自對美學要求不同，「三班都是十分不同的人，學習環境和出發點也不同。」他解釋，設計師看重設計部份；退休媽媽從她的經驗得出一套設計準則，對何謂「美感」有自己的價值；年輕媽媽則對設計和美感沒有嚴格的要求。

當設計一件織品時，三方要談如何才是「美」，耗時良久。「傳承的過程有很多溝通，大家的要求如何，要求的落差、時間的落差，各方面都要磨合。例如我講一句說話，這東西要怎樣做，其實大家想法已經有三個完全不同的畫面。」

「美感是她們從各自的經驗中累積得來。」合作久了，Made in Sample給予退休媽媽和年輕媽媽們最大的自主性，讓她們混熟了，整件事就順暢得多。

Clive says, “The textile industry in Hong Kong prospered in the sixties until the eighties. These retired mothers have skills better than textile workers from other countries. I want to find ways to pass on these skills and at the same time, generate income.” Good Seed’s vision is to act as a catalyst for social innovation in Hong Kong, so as to tackle the issues of poverty and social isolation, and to create social benefits. The “Made in Sample” project, which provides training and job opportunities for single mothers, echoes with the ideology of Good Seed. With the assistance of the SIE Fund, the project was launched with one retired female garment worker leading four to five young single mothers in the production of fabric works.

“Made in Sample” operates on a small scale that resembles both a small factory and a small family. “Because I teach design as well, I think I teach better the smaller the class is. If there are a lot of people, it becomes a factory. Having just a few feels like a small family.” Clive says as “Made in Sample” is operating smoothly now, “the retired mother could kill time and pass on her skills. She treats those teenage mothers like her daughters. She would call to chat and check on them. She has a lot of life experiences and now that they have formed their own little family, it is nice to see the project develops naturally.”

Differences in Aesthetic Vision, Respecting Autonomy the Prerequisite for Compromise

As with the common character of a designer, Clive’s strengths lie in design and eye for beauty. Communication however has been a challenging obstacle, and sometimes overwhelms him, who in addition has a full-time job. A team that comprises a designer, a retired mother and teenage mothers surely have different aesthetic standards. “Three groups of very different people mean different learning backgrounds and different points of departure.” He explained how designers focus on the designing part while the retired mother has her set of design standards developed from her experience. Teenage mothers, however, do not have strict design and aesthetic standards.

When designing a fabric work, the three parties would spend hours to agree on what is “beautiful”. “The process of passing on the artistry has encouraged a lot of communications on how we compromise on the discrepancies on demand, time and other aspects. A simple remark on how to make a product might lead to three vastly different pictures in our minds.”

“They develop their aesthetics from their own experience.” Over time, “Made in Sample” has allowed the greatest degree of autonomy to the retired and teenage mothers. After they got to know each other more, the whole thing goes much smoother.