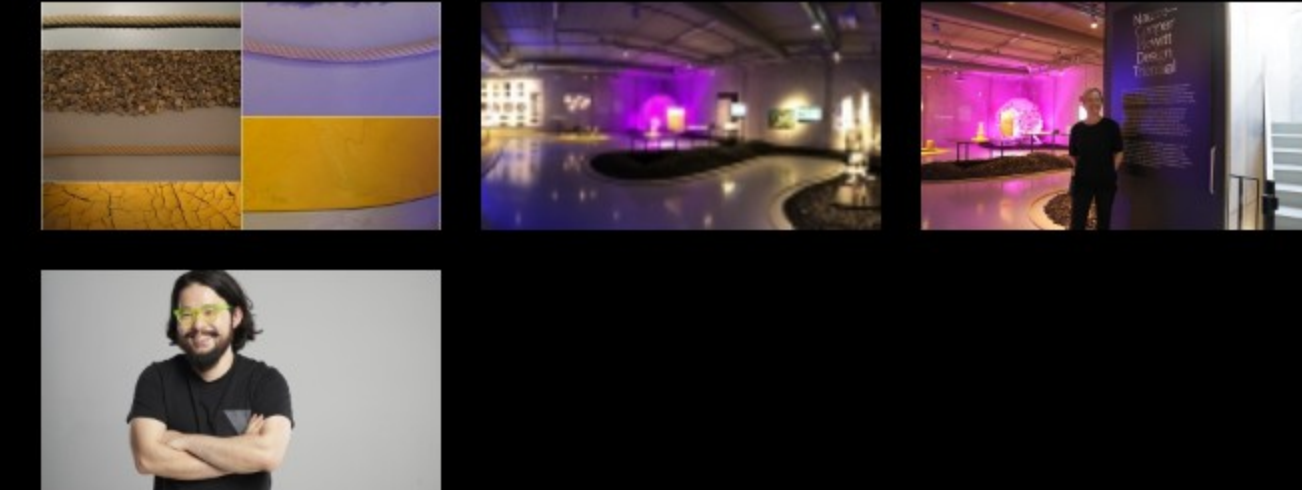




Inspiration from My Three-month Stay for the Designer in Residence Program in Germany - Part 4/4



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V. A Museum Guide Doubles as an Experience Designer: from Achievement to Fulfillment

A while ago, I was fortunate enough to be invited to the Cube Design Museum in the Netherlands to share my ideas on Industry 4.0 topics. I also took this opportunity to see a design exhibit of mine there. After getting off the train and depositing my light luggage, I went straight to the museum to see the exhibition. The museum was about to close at five p.m., so there were not many visitors and I could just quietly tour around the place at my own pace. Presently a woman dressed all in black came to me and offered to guide me around, to which I nodded yes. While I could choose to see the exhibition by myself, I was very glad that someone volunteered to be my guide. And that someone was Ms. Marina Sjoer.

I knew from Ms. Marina Sjoer's thorough introductions that there were no text explanations at the NATURE - Collaborations in Design exhibition in the Cube Design Museum. But visitors could choose instead beautifully designed guidebooks or mobile voice guidance. The text-free approach creates a neat exhibition environment with consistent visual appeal. And most importantly, it allows the audience to focus on the experience by interacting and engaging more with the design works. I also learned that the carpets found in every section of the exhibition hall were made from materials like pulp, gravel and wood, and would be recycled rather than discarded after the exhibition. Careful design details like these are a nod to the theme of nature and sustainability. (* Fig 1 - Floors covered with carpets made from several recyclable materials (Photo courtesy: Sheng-Hung Lee))

For two days, Ms. Marina Sjoer guided me around the museum, took pictures of me and the exhibits, and accompanied me to explore other interesting places, like the theatre with 360-degree downward projections. She also explained the reasons behind her tour route design choices, and one story particularly stood out for me. There was a semi-open exhibition space in the second floor playing a film about an already-extinct species of rhinos whose sound could be heard no matter where you were in the exhibition hall. To filter out this background sound, she would take the visitors over in front of the space and asked them which animal made the sound. When everyone was discussing among themselves, she would slowly lead the crowd into the space where the film was played and revealed that the sound came from the already-extinct white rhinos. When visitors left the space, their brains would automatically filter out the sound not because the film itself was muted, but because their mind had understood and accepted the sound. (** Fig 2 - Text-free exhibition spaces (Photo courtesy: Sheng-Hung Lee))

This story inspires some thinking of mine that Ms. Marina Sjoer, who is passionate about and devoted to work without doubt, wins my respect as a professional museum guide as well as a competent service experience designer. She's paid attention to every detail during the guiding process, such as filtering out the background sound for visitors. She also shares with me about the other advantage for the text-free approach in the exhibition - improvising the experience she'd like to convey to the audience as a guide at her own will. It is not her wish to impose the direct answer to or only one way of appreciating every piece of work on visitors. Instead, she wants to throw some open-ended questions concerning the works and their creators, thus inspiring thinking and discussion in this aspect.

After more talk with Ms. Marina Sjoer, I find that apart from participation in the guiding process, she joined the team since the start of the preparation meeting of the NATURE - Collaborations in Design exhibition which lasted for two years and a half. She was dedicated to getting to know every story behind the exhibition space, conducting full discussions with curators, and reading every designer's works. Then I realized the professionalism of the job as a museum guide, as well as the high value it represents. In the end, I took the initiative to take a picture of her with the poster of the exhibition, which would remind me of her pursuit of excellence at work and her professional attitude. Some get a job to bring home the bacon, some regard it as a responsibility that can bring a sense of achievement, while others see it as a platform where people can fulfill their mission. (*** Fig 3 - Ms. Marina Sjoer, guide of Cube Design Museum (Photo courtesy: Sheng-Hung Lee))

--- The End ---

About the author - Sheng-Hung Lee (**** Fig 4 - Author Profile)

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Sheng-Hung Lee is a designer, maker and educator. He is inspired by multiple domains of knowledge, different perspectives, and he thrives on creating new value for clients in multi-disciplinary teams. He is trained as an industrial designer and electrical engineer, and his approach to problem solving is influenced by his passion for how design and technology impact on and can be integrated into society. He has recently collaborated with the Industrial Designers Society of America (IDSA) to inform their strategy, service and user experience for the Asia market, and led the effort to incorporate such work in his recent book "IDSA Blueprint in Asia". Sheng-Hung has been focusing on organization design that creates systemic impact. He was invited to be a jury for multiple international design competition including IDEA, Spark Design Award, IDA Award and A' Design Award and Competition. He is a member of respected institutions such as Taiwan Society of Technology and Sociology, Phi Tau Phi Scholastic Honor Society, and China Technical Consultants Inc.

Sheng-Hung graduated with a double Bachelor's degree (Hon.) in Industrial Design and Electrical Engineering from National Cheng Kung University (NCKU), Taiwan. His work has won prestigious awards including IDEA Gold, Braun Prize, Core77 Design Award, Red Dot (Best of the Best), Spark Design Award, European Product Design Award (Gold) and iF Award. His works have also been showcased in Dubai Design Week, Venice Design Week and the Cooper Hewitt museum. Sheng-Hung teaches product design at Fudan University Shanghai Institute of Visual Art and Detao Masters Academy as adjunct associate professor.