

REPORT AL RIENTRO DELL'ESPERIENZA DI  
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## Testo

I wanted to go to Japan for the exchange program before I applied for the master of Polytechnic University of Milan. I came to Italy in 2010 after the high school in China, and I studied undergraduate at the University of Camerino. In the first year of the university, we had a lesson of the story of design, and in many European and American designers, I saw a Japanese designer Shiro Kuramata, from that time on, I was so curious about the design of Japan. After the undergraduate studies in Italy, I wanted to go back to Asia to see the design world, and I was really very lucky that I could have the chance to study at the best art university in Japan, the Tokyo University of the Arts.

In Japan, the new school year starts when the sakura(Cherry blossoms) is in full bloom. I arrived at Tokyo one week before the school began, so in the first week I visited various attractions.

On the first day of the school, I met my professor Nagahama. In Italy, the master study is credit system, but in Japan, it's tutor system, so in the design department, there are about 9 different research rooms, everyone has the different research directions, my research room is the product design. After that we had a meeting with all the professors and all the new students of master in design, about 50 students only, so every research room has about 6 students, the distance with the professor is really close. Every teacher did the speech, when I thought it was over, they asked students to do the self introduction. My Japanese was really poor, I only could say hello and thank you at that time, everyone did a Japanese speaking, also did the other exchange students, I was really regret that I didn't prepare well.

I chose five courses, two of them are required courses, the Study on Design and the Design Project, others are chosen courses, the Art Direction, the Product Planning and the Japanese.

The study on Design is to do a research by yourself with the help of the professor, every one or two weeks we had a meeting with professor Nagahama and other students of first year. At the beginning, the teacher will do a small lesson of variety topics, like the story of the chair, the objects he did, the working circumstances in Japan and so on. But he never gave us a topic to do, I

was not used to it, because during the study in Italy, we always had a topic on the lesson, so we know what we need to do. The professor only said, do what you like.

What do I like? I like the traditional Japanese cultures and the new technologies, so I wanted to mix these two things, at the first, I presented something like mixing the kimono (traditional Japanese dress) and the 3D printing cloth, the traditional Japanese vase and 3D printing vase, and trying to add sensors and arduinos with Japanese things, and then I did the research on the existed projects of the same mixing, after this, I was thinking what is the beauty of Japan. I think the beauty of Japan is "WabiSabi", which is a Japanese aesthetics that is sometimes described as one of beauty that is "imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete". The professor was very surprised that a foreigner knew the "WabiSabi", I said that I knew it because I read a book written by Leonard Koren, <wabisabi, for artists, designers, poets and philosophies>. What about other foreigners? I was thinking maybe I could do a easy interview on the foreigners in Tokyo. I asked around 30 foreigners, whom were workers, students and travelers, the questions were "do you think what is the beauty of Japan?"; "do you know wabisabi?"; and the basic information, the age, the job and the country. The result was interesting, most of them like the Japanese person, the nature, the culture, the mix of traditional and the modern, and only people worked in design, art and architecture knew wabisabi.

People usually can't see the precious things around them, so my concept was "the beauty of Japan from a foreigner", I chose "Kintsugi", which is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum. The objects of Kintsugi are really beautiful, and I love the philosophy that from repair the broken pottery, to give a new soul into it. I wanted to use the 3D printing parts to replace the golden parts to connect the broken parts, using the selective laser sintering technology to make a complex and geometric form, I thought the mixing with pottery and the geometric form will be interesting. So I started to study the parametric design and the grasshopper, at the same time, I was searching the 3D scanner for the broken pottery.

I rent a 3D scanner, but the precision was very low, so I tried to make a 3D model of the broken parts by myself. The grasshopper and its plug-ins were really difficult, I did some net structures, the gravity simulation, the wind simulation and so on, but all the forms of them I didn't satisfied. Till now, I used almost 2 months.

After these attempts, I was confused by what I was doing, and why I was doing, I was thinking the reason of my concept, and I tried to do some contrast thinking of the relationship of broken and complete.

In Chinese Buddhism, there were a famous poem: "There is no wisdom tree; nor a stand of a mirror bright, Since all is void, where can the dust alight?" which means in the Buddha's world all the things are void. But in the human world, the person defined the things, they defined what is broken, what is complete, but in the Buddha's world, broken is complete, complete is broken. To present this meaning, I decided to do a Buddha's hand to hold the broken pottery, like the pottery is not broken. The Buddha's hand is void, so I decided to use the net structure to present the meaning.

In fact I wanted to use the selective laser sintering to do the hand, but it was really expensive and it was difficult to do the 3d model of the hand, so I asked the friend of the sculpture department to help me.

It took about 3 weeks to do the model, it was really a good experience to do something like a sculpture with art student, I tried so many new things like a hand of clay molding, metal welding and so on.

When the project finished, I took some photos with it in different places in Tokyo, and did the posters trying to explain well my concept. It also be exhibited on the school festival in september 2016.

The second required course is Design Project, every student of the first year need to be participate, so it was a good chance to meet all the students and work with students of different research directions. The topic of this course was a little bit similar with my topic of study on design, which was to design something to attractive people's attention on the japanese traditional handicrafts. I was really surprised about the inheritance of japanese culture, because when I was in Italy, I never be touched with the Italian traditional things in the university, we always learn the newest things in the world. And the traditional handicrafts were expensive and most of the younger people didn't like them. So we need to do something to change this situation.

The courses divided in two parts, also we made two different groups. The first part was to do the research on area activation. Our group first worked on "pilgrimage to sacred place", everyone knows the japanese animations are very famous in the world, so some of the places appeared in the animation were the real places in the world, so the fans of the animation go to the places for pilgrimage to show their love. More travelers appeared, brought some good impacts in the area, and activated the area. The second case is a company did, which named "townway". The founder of the company went back to his hometown, a bamboo mountain, started with a warm hotel, then he tried to did some exchange program with universities, he applied the students for the bed and food, the students did something for the hotel or for the small town. For example, some students designed projects made by the local materials, some wrote stories to put online, some did the decorations for the hotel. After the first success of the program, they started to do the program also with the workers in different ages, this helped the people to know the bamboo mountain, also more and more young people went there for work. After two years, visitors came to bamboo mountain increased by 40 percent. This is really a good case for the area activation, also this case was found by me, so the group mates asked me to present this part during the presentation, I was very nervous on the presentation day, although I was just reading the written articles.

In the second part, we did a toy machine within traditional handicrafts, also the machine itself we used the technology of the fine woodworking, the ball which half was transparent, half was a bowl of lacquerware, inside we did small toy which were modern things but made by traditional handicrafts. It was really interesting that everyone had his work, someone did the drawing, someone did the UI design and the website, someone made the machine and so on.

Other chosen courses were also interesting, in the art direction we did a packaging design for a delicious candy and a exhibition design of what will happen in 2021. The product planning taught us the classical processes of product planning. And the Japanese lessons really helped a lot for the whole time in Japan.

I want to talk about the Japanese people. The Japanese were really very nice, they helped me a lot. During the course study on design, we had small lessons, max 6 students, the professor always write the chinese characters on the white board to help me to understand what he said(Japanese language divides in 3 parts, one of them are chinese character, so sometimes, chinese and japanese can comunicate during the chinese characters) . I was lucky thath in these 6 students, other than me, there was another chinese student, so he always translated for me.

After the study, the students and the professor will go to drink together, or go to another city for a short trip. Traveling with the Japanese is a really different expierence, because it helps me to know the local culture. We went to a official house of the university together, we went to a beach together, we went to a friend's grandfather's house in the mountain together and so on. They also took me to the some restautants, and I also searched some delicious chinese restaurant for them. During these expierences, they taught me how to eat sushi in a right way, which ways of using chopsticks were wrong, some interesting words and so on.

During the holidays and weekends, I traveled some cities in Japan, and when I saw the Fuji Mountain, I can understand why the Japanese love it so much. I also had expierences of wearing the traditinal japanese dresses, Yukata and Kimono, one is for the summer, one is for other seasons. In the august, Japanese like to see the fireworks. When the most big firework event held in Tokyo, our professore invited us to his house, that was really a great time.

All the August, I went to the design studio of my professor for a intership. In this period, I talked a lot with my professor, I told him everything, also about my confusion with my future, he gave me some suggestions.

I can't write well, but I think this exchange expierence is really great.

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Autorizzo al trattamento dei miei dati personali ai sensi del Decreto Legislativo n. 196/03 da parte del Politecnico di Milano.

Firma *liuruichen*