Designing a prime mover of the new millennium

'The key factor of a successful designer today is sound design thinking with an understanding of the value of entrepreneurship in design,' says Wong.

THE demand for innovative design has increased significantly over the last 20 years

Tech start-ups like Facebook, Google, Behance and Youtube as well as established industry players like Adobe and Microsoft have cutting-edge design both in form and function as the heart and soul of their products. Design industries have begun to make a significant impact on the gross domestic product (GDP) in many developed and developing countries.

Even in Malaysia, the contribution to GDP by the design industries has been increasing.

Design thinking has permeated Singapore and Indonesia so much so that Unesco has recognised them as Creative Cities of Design.

Singapore is shifting to becoming a "nation of design thinkers".

Last year, Fortune 500 companies, which include Volkswagen, Toyota Motor, Apple, Samsung Electronics and Aphabet, have indicated that design sits at the very core of their business models.

The world is starting to connect design, technology and business for business ideas to the consumer. Many successful designers are also great entrepreneurs.

The shift in business models from designer to entrepreneurs has led to the established of successful tech companies such as Steward Butterfield, the co-founder of Flickr and Belsky Scott of Behance.

The implication of this also resulted many design institutions, colleges and universities offering Art and Design programmes.

Most of the top world business schools have student-led design clubs or design partnerships. Design education in the 21st century is also evolving. It no longer focuses on solving function, materials, aesthetics and crafts skills. Instead, it will incorporate more human experience centred with design strategies to integrate social, technology and business.

The curriculum will have multidisciplinary modules in the field of user experiences, interaction design, sustainable design, business, psychology, sociology, computer science and engineering into the theory and practice of design.

Sunway University School of Arts Department of Art and Design head Augustine Wong stressed that job opportunities will become wider for design graduates.

"The 21st century graphic designer will soon be User Experience (UX) designers and doing creative jobs robots cannot do. The job tasks for designers will be increasingly complex, from UI/X, Augmented Reality and Real-time 3D designers towards leadership roles in companies as chief creative officer (CCO). It will also see more successful designers to become design entrepreneurs and create better products and services for the betterment of the human condition," he said.

"As part of its initiative in transforming design education, the department initiated the Design Entrepreneurship programme in 2015 to provide an opportunity for design students to be involved with industry real projects, networking and funding for new business. The department has a strong industry partners' programme such as a sharing session, study trip, project collaboration and an internship programme, providing job opportunities and real-world project collaborations for the students before they even graduate.

"To become a designer, just the passion for design is no longer enough. It is about loving the design process and design thinking in problem solving. Designers in this century need to refine the traditional roles and acquire new knowledge and skills set to meet the demand for innovation and advancing technology. The key factor of a successful designer today is sound design thinking with an understanding of the value of entrepreneurship in design," Wong shared.

To produce the designer of the 21st century, the school has embarked on strategising its curriculum to meet this expanded learning outcome that students would need to be aware and exposed to the opportunities available. The programme incorporates multidisciplinary modules such as Design Enterprise, Computing, Design for Society, and Sustainable Design. The department also offers programmes that emphasise job creation and nurturing well-equipped entrepreneurial designers.

The Department of Art and Design under the School of Arts at Sunway University offers the Diploma in Graphic and Multimedia Design and Diploma in Interior Design. In August this year, the department will be introducing BA (Hons) in Interior Architecture, a new home-grown programme.

■ For details about the programmes, call 03-7491 8622 or e-mail info@sunway.edu.my or visit *https://university.sunway.edu.my/arts.*