



Reclaiming Beauty

by Vinky Wong Hiu-ying



COURTESY OF ZING

YANKY WONG/HUI-YING

He has worked with such celebrated beauties as French actress Sophie Marceau, pop diva Faye Wong and Hong Kong film star Carina Lau Kaling. The stars line up for his services and fellow make-up artists envy his job and his client list.

Zing has created numerous iconic and memorable looks such as Sammi Cheng's "Nike Eyebrow", Faye Wong's "Teardrop Look" and "Neon Impressionism" make-up in his 20-year career. He has also published books, held solo exhibitions and set up a make-up school.

Ironically, the master of innovative and creative make-up does not like wearing cosmetics himself. He feels uncomfortable when he has to wear make-up for public appearances and wipes it off immediately after working.

"It's like doing something onto others but I don't want it to be done to me. I just don't like it on my face," he says.

He does, however, have a sure sense of personal style. The 40-year-old make-up veteran sports his trademark shaved head and big glasses and wears a stylish Chanel jacket and boots.

Fashionable necklaces and earrings completed the look.

Although he dislikes wearing make-up himself, he is passionate about make-up as a form of expression. He does not see it as a mask but as a way to show off individuality and an enhancement of beauty. It is not for concealing what people do not want others to see but for expressing feelings and attitudes and further enhancing a person's unique qualities.

Zing, who is inspired by the revolutionary 20th century artist Pablo Picasso, is widely regarded as a revolutionary make-up artist for the 21st century. But he is a commercial Picasso. He says his work belongs to the commercial world.

He is, however, a commercial artist who has succeeded because of his own aesthetics and creative sense. Locally, he is seen as one of the most influential people in changing the nature of make-up artists and creating innovative trends.

Born in Singapore, Zing started his career in Hong Kong in 1992 by accident. He had originally planned to come to Hong Kong for just a month, but the workaholic fell in love with the non-stop city and immediately decided

to stay here. "I feel I can work around the clock. I can always get things done here," he says.

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Zing mostly taught himself about make-up although he did take several make-up lessons and had some experience in helping his parents in their performing arts work. For a man who is sure of himself and his work, Zing can also be modest. He believes that hard work and luck, rather than mere talent helped him kick off his career.

In 1998, Zing became the first Chinese make-up artist to be interviewed by Cable News Network (CNN) and garnered several awards. When asked whether the awards have motivated him, he comments: "None of the rewards matter at all to me. They do

not influence me in any way. How are these people judging anyway?"

His answer is similarly brief when asked whether he considers his work art. "I don't even think about it. I don't care," he says. "What is art? Tell me what art is."

Zing does not have any clear guidelines for a concept of what make-up should be. He has ideas and inspirations, and he gets these from everywhere, from Picasso's cubism to the simple texture of a new foundation powder.

He is clear about one thing though, that there is something wrong with the local make-up industry.

When he first arrived in Hong Kong, he discovered everything was done by the rules. Zing wanted to show people that make-up could create visual excitement as well as enhance beauty. "I just want to do stuff that's aesthetically appealing and exciting," he says. His faces with attractive, convention-defying make-up characterise his golden years.

However, he believes the revolution he started has spun rapidly out of control recently. The nature of make-up has been distorted. The creative and appealing work of the past has already

been transformed into a formula to catch attention.

"To achieve creativity, you cannot break the rule for the sake of breaking it."

Zing says there are too many people in Hong Kong abusing the word "creativity" to package their work; regardless of whether the work is beautiful or not. Many regard their work as creative just because they are out of the ordinary. He cites as an example, an issue of *East Touch Magazine* which replaced a butterfly with a cockroach on a model's eyebrows. It was one of the moments when he realised something was wrong.

"To achieve creativity, you cannot break rules for the sake of breaking them," he says without hesitation. "You break rules because you think it's going to look good like this."

Like Picasso, Zing mastered the basic skills before he became creative. He is adamant that people have to be





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very familiar with basic rules before they can play with them or break them. In order to draw a vivid rough line on a face, he prefers repeated practice drawing straight lines first.

“All creative works need a basic foundation of beauty as a frame to avoid going crazy or out of control.” Zing echoes Picasso’s ideas: Cubism has remained within the limitation of painting and never gone beyond. Pushing boundaries without reason and skill will only produce aesthetically displeasing things.

He admits that he can no longer generate any more creative ideas at the moment because his vision is polluted by so-called “creative works” every day.

Worse still, the public seems to have lost the ability to judge beauty and ugliness after being “polluted”. Nobody seems to notice or react to the issue that is vexing Zing, who shows his disappointment and keeps questioning. He realises the urgent need for another revolution.

“This trend of extraordinary beauty is created by me but I cannot continue anymore,” he says. “I think, at least, I

have to do something that is true to my heart at this moment.”

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Zing wants to return to the essentials. He strongly believes that people have the innate ability to know what is beautiful. People should be looking at beautiful things, not crazy things.

In his new column, “The Most Beautiful Woman in Hong Kong Wear Zing”, in the *Ming Pao Weekly* magazine. Zing tries to go back to basics. He wants to show true beauty to the Hong Kong people.

During the interview, Zing lights cigarette after cigarette, holding his forehead and pondering seriously with a frown most of the time. When he gets

inspired, he suddenly wakes up from his daze and talks with great passion. His icy exterior may make people scared of communicating with him. Yet this image is as misleading as it is unintentional: the only thing he cares about is being true to himself.

During the photo shoot, Zing makes it clear he does not like having his photos taken. He checks every image carefully after the interview. He is a perfectionist who is concerned about his professional image. He wants to show himself to the public in a visually appealing way and he is an original. When asked to strike a pose, he warns: “Don’t expect me to pick up a brush in front of the camera. Make-up artists do not necessarily have to be related to make-up tools or cosmetics.”



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