



# *Inherited Culture & Cultural Artefacts Enhances Creativity*



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Creativity and the ability to innovate are the results of self-trust and self-confidence. The understanding of the cultures of a nation, the uniqueness of cultural artefacts and the handicraft skills of the ancestors can build the confidence, empower and preserve the creative thinking ability of its people.

Culture and cultural artefacts that are sometimes considered obsolete, can be used as a source of inspiration to be a catalyst of creativity and innovation for the creation of future designs. As proof, we can refer to the beauty and grandeur of the Putrajaya International Convention Centre building. The aesthetically pleasing and functionally appropriate Convention Centre is designed with the concept of cultural artefacts, namely the 'Pending Perak' buckle of the Malay Rulers.

Apart from that, in the design of the famous Honshu-Shikoki Bridge Authority's project, the traditional Japanese gardeners' natural stone arrangement rule "Najimi" and cultural artefacts motifs such as a Japanese helmet, a Japanese castle, a folk-art article of a horse, and a Tsuzumi are simplified and applied to enhance the strength and beauty of the award-winning bridge. These designs prove that the thinking patterns of the world designers are changing towards cultural knowledge and skills. Thus, local designers could turn local cultural artefacts as their aesthetic design concepts.

Historically, Malaysia has its own cultural strengths because it has become a melting pot of various cultures from countries such as China, India, the Middle East, Europe and many more. The process of adapting multicultural practices has resulted in the use of various cultural artefacts among Malaysians. For example, since the establishment of the Perak Museum in 1883, various cultural artefacts have been collected and categorized into groups of artefacts according to their functions such as armaments, dance-related artefacts, traditional theatre, traditional music instruments, cloths and jewelleryes, handicrafts, games artefacts, maritime

related artefacts and many more. These artefacts need to be studied and understood carefully in terms of explicit and implicit values so that the information and related knowledge help in finding the creative and novel design concepts.

In addition, cultural artefacts can also be a reference in understanding the application of design elements, design principles and design forms creatively. For example, we examine the uniqueness of the child modesty disc (Caping/Arunamudi) design. Child modesty discs were introduced into Tanah Melayu (later Malaysia) between the seventh and 12th century. These discs were tied with strings to the waist of children from the age of one year until they were able to dress themselves. The modesty discs are commonly shaped as a betel leaf to be fitted to the shape of human inguen or groin. This ancestral design shows the application of the 'form follow function' in the cultural artefact design much earlier than the maxim coined by architect Louis Sullivan (1856-1924).

The modesty discs motif or pattern also represented the creativity of our ancestors which emphasised on flexibility, refinement balance, unity, functionality, and symbolism without compromising in the quality of form and function. On the other hand, the child modesty disc also shows that the ancestors applied designing techniques such as translation, rotation, reflection, and glide reflections to ensure the child modesty discs were aesthetically pleasant. The literature on this device shows that plant motifs that were used as decorations in child modesty discs were rich in medical benefits.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the creations of ancestors such as cultural artefacts can be essential references in enhancing the creativity of local designers and their innovativeness. On the other hand, the decorative motifs and implicit connotations of the designs of cultural artefacts, provide deep messages and awareness for local designers of their responsibilities towards future generations through their design creations.