



## Kam Fan: Turning the tables on creativity

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By: Matt Eaton, Hong Kong

### KAM FAN AWARDS ADVERTISING



Hong Kong - Sam Ball, creative partner at Lean Mean Fighting Machine

London argues Asia still ranks below the US and parts of Europe as a creative hub, but he says evidence shows things are changing.

In the lead up to the 25th Kam Fan Awards, *Marketing* continues its series of Q&A's with leading creatives and Kam Fan judges.

Ball will be in Hong Kong later this year as a Creative & iDA judge for the 2009 Kam Fan Awards.

#### ***Has the role of creativity become more important during these economically unstable times?***

Bilbao is Spain's 4th largest city, in the early 90's a once prosperous city was in the middle of an economically unstable period, it was a drab industrial town, with an image problem that needed fixing. The city authorities commissioned Frank Gehry, to build a magnificent new Guggenheim Museum. People flocked from all over the world to wonder at the building and its contents. This intern led to new Hotels, restaurants, public spaces and further regeneration. This flash of creativity, The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, forever changed the way the world thinks about museums, and the city of Bilbao. It wasn't the first time creativity enabled a spectacular transformation in an economic down turn and it certainly won't be the last.

#### ***How does Asia rank globally for its creative output?***

On the whole Asia still ranks below the US and certain parts of Europe, although there is evidence to suggest things are changing. In recent years I have seen some brilliant work coming out of Asia, this work has gone a long way to change people's perceptions. Asian agencies are starting to pick up major prizes in global award shows. A lot of the western work can look and feel the same. So it's refreshing when you see new ideas from Asia. My advice would be don't look at Western advertising for inspiration, continue to speak in your unique way and people will continue to be surprised and delighted.

#### ***Do you see China as an emerging creative powerhouse?***

I went to Shanghai for a creative conference last year, where I met young creative people from various industries, including, design, fashion, journalism, music, and art. I was overwhelmed by the passion and ambition of these young creative people. China will only become a power house if they nurture this young talent. In Britain there are numerous organizations that encourage and help young creative people find jobs and progress their careers. Agencies also play an integral part with many of them helping students, by offering placements and book critics. True or not the perception is that China has a thriving manufacturing industry, but that about it. Imagine a future where Chinese people can Design, manufacture, and then sell the product themselves.

***Which part of the world serves as a good barometer for creative and effective work?***

I don't think you can identify good work solely by geography. I see great work coming from countries that traditionally haven't been big hitters. The digital work coming out of Sweden, Japan and South America is second to none.

***How important are award shows today?***

Awards shows are important, but some are more important than others. We could easily enter over 40 award shows every year, but we only bother with five or six of them. Anyone who enters them and then says they are not important are lying or are stupid.

***Should clients sit up and take notice of campaigns that rate well on the awards circuit?***

People are bombarded by advertising, and most of them have become comfortably numb to it. Most advertising looks and feels like advertising, most of it is boring, and most people ignore it. Consequently the work that wins the awards are generally the ones that feel fresh, they are well written, and most importantly they are the ones that people tend to look at. So if the people are sitting up and taking notice of them the clients should as well.

***What in particular will you be looking at in the creative work submitted to this year's Kam Fan awards?***

Different pieces of work win for different reasons, some you admire for the craft and execution, some make you belly laugh, others are brilliant insights you have never seen before, however, the best work moves you. The one thing that the best ideas have in common is that the work is born from a truth, a truth that can only be attributed to the product they're selling.