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Business Matters



COVER STORY

Unique Central London needs recovery plan

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Understanding China - spotlight on Yintong Betser



Regular readers of this magazine will know that Yintong

Betser has been a frequent contributor on China and Chinese affairs since 2009 so it feels only right to turn the spotlight for once on this creative and entrepreneurial lady writes *Theresa Booth*

I have known Yintong for over 20 years, since she first became a member of the Chopsticks Club, and must have discussed with her almost every subject relating to China. But it is only by doing this interview that I have properly discovered the extent of her pioneering and creative career.

Yintong was born in Beijing and moved with her British husband to London in 1993 where she worked for a travel company followed by three years with Tottenham Hotspur Football Club as a marketing executive. Whilst working at the club, she met her first client and became the company's Chinese consultant. It was in this role that she realised the need for bilingual, Mandarin and English, professionals to help UK businesses thrive in China. Consequently she set up her own enterprise, ACTIVE Anglo Chinese Communications, a business and PR consultancy helping UK and Chinese businesses develop in each other's country.

Collaboration

In 2005 she completed a master's degree in marketing to ensure she was speaking the same language as many of her British clients and be better able to support her Chinese clients. As ACTIVE grew, organising events and accompanying British companies on missions to China, she saw the need for handy simple business guidebooks. The result was *Active Business Travel - Great Britain* (in Chinese) and *Active Business Travel - China* (in English), both of which have since been reprinted as a result of a successful collaboration with London Chamber of Commerce and Industry and China Telecom Europe. On republication, both guides were endorsed by the then Trade Minister, Lord Stephen Green.



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Yintong talks with...

Kevin Sui, chief executive of China Hour



British government's ambition to have 5,000 British people speaking fluent Chinese by 2020, and the rise to third of Chinese in the table of most studied languages at A-level, overtook Kevin Sui's explanation: "The general programmes relating to China were produced in line with the business and diplomatic audience in mind. Those programmes had a great deal of depth but they were not in sufficient quantity and coverage to be informative enough to the general public, so China Hour was born."

"It is in English with the core target audience being the British middle-class population. To achieve that, we don't just buy programmes and put them on our channel. Instead, we repurpose them and dub the narrative in English." As an example he gave a programme called *The - the story of a boy below*. The original programme was superb but achieved surprisingly low viewing figures. Kevin learnt from this experience.

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initial goal was to achieve 300,000 per month in the first year but in the first month it had already reached over 600,000 and gathered a viewing of 9-10 million in 2018, with only four hours of daily broadcasting. To achieve this result, Kevin and his team cover the whole process, from the selection of a programme, to importing, editing, promotion and sales. With the time difference, Kevin says late at night to ensure it is ready for his Chinese counterpart to proceed first thing in the morning, then he gets up early to catch up with his colleagues in China before they go home. This efficiency has benefited Kevin greatly as he now can enjoy a successful work-life balance, a quality time to look after his daughter and be there for his family.

Kevin's parents had high hopes for him to become a respected doctor but he says: "I'm not a doctor, I'm a businessman. In fact, his career went off on a completely different track. What would they make of it now if they were alive?" "I still have a long way to go to change the world for the better but I feel I am on track in contributing to the promotion of the understanding between different cultures and people. The direction hasn't changed. I know they would be happy to see I am doing something I enjoy - and that, I certainly do."

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Yintong talks with...

Patrik Schumacher, principal of Zaha Hadid Architects



Zaha Hadid Architects (ZHA) was founded in 1980 by the architect Zaha Hadid, crowned "the queen of the curve" by *The Guardian* for her distinctive style representing "biomimetic architectural geometry, giving it a whole new expressive identity". Sadly, Zaha passed away four years ago, and Patrik Schumacher took over, championing the company's cutting-edge, biomimetic architecture throughout the world. Schumacher has degrees in mathematics and philosophy, as well as a PhD in architecture, and joined the firm when it was in its infancy. He was not, he tells me, driven by financial gain but by ideas and the company vision. "I believed in her and her firm."

Zaha Hadid's creativity and tremendous drive was tempered by an intense and occasionally abrasive character. Schumacher was able to survive and indeed thrive. With only four in the company, everyone had to pull their weight and get things done. Schumacher and Hadid worked through thick and thin, giving clients together and bidding for projects all over the world from Australia to Mexico, from the Middle East to China. Their projects ranged from an opera house to retail, from culture centres to mega cities. At the point of Hadid's untimely death in 2016, ZHA had 30 projects on-site in 21 countries. They were undeniably a tight project team with complementary skills - Hadid's genius of innovation and creativity; Schumacher, magazine-like, weaving ideas and creativity into finished products through systematic thinking, backed up by theory.

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with permanent local offices based in Beijing and Hong Kong.

Thrilling. It didn't in Hong Kong, several buildings go up together, a community is built, while others are created on a big scale at the same time - a thrilling experience and a great challenge for any architect. UK government support has been welcome and helped secure ZHA's recently completed Beijing Daxing International Airport, the largest airport in the world. This was necessary as the French and American competitors had mobilised support from their governments. In respect of the diplomatic efforts, ultimately the best scheme won.

What advice could Schumacher share with other Western businesses working with China? "Having capable Chinese colleagues and gathering a reliable and trusted circle of support is crucial. We regularly give lectures and share our knowledge in China. Basically, we make ourselves available, develop friendships and build trust. I still need to be involved in PR at the most senior level but we rely on our local staff to maintain the good relationship we have with related partners on a daily basis on the ground."

Fabulous buildings. Since after they met the client-entrepreneur couple Pan Shiyi and Zhang Xia of the Sino Clinix Group in Beijing. Their varied backgrounds and cultures - Pan was originally from Hong Kong and brought up in Britain - and strong desire to create fabulous buildings in China combined to make them a potent and multiple award-winning force in architecture in the decades to come.

Despite the challenges of lengthy decision-making processes, fast delivery expectations, Schumacher enjoys working in China, finding its political and financial stability reassuring. Having worked there since launching his first project of Guangzhou Opera House, 2003 - 2010, ZHA has now developed a comprehensive project management system.

Vibrant. Riding on the wave of the global architectural boom, ZHA has grown in the last two decades with astonishing speed. The number of permanent staff has increased from 60 to 400, and it has 950 projects in 44 countries.

With only three projects built in England though, I hope that Zaha Hadid Architects will bring more of its modern, innovative buildings to our shores. After all, London, as Schumacher's opinion, is the most exciting city in the world with a vibrant and versatile architectural environment, and where he and Zaha Hadid developed their craft and prepared themselves for ZHA's global success.

Yintong Betser is managing director of ACTIVE Anglo Chinese Communications connecting business culture with PR and marketing. She has published a series of books on doing business in China.

www.activeukchina.com

Celebrated

Milestones during her twenty plus year journey running her own consultancy have included a pioneering photographic exhibition called *Ebb & Flow* at the Saatchi Gallery in 2014, where Lord Heseltine was a keynote speaker. He praised the bringing of the best of Chinese cul-

ture to the UK for its ability to build better country-to-country relations and people-to-people understanding. This photography exhibition gave rise to a new business shift for Yintong, from previously supporting mostly British companies doing business in China, she started helping Chinese companies connect

with the international market, particularly in the culture sector.

Her curated events have included a high-profile fashion forum for the Shanghai Fashion Week, the Guanxi in the Western Context book launch for Professor Barbara Wang as well as her popular annual Chinese New Year receptions



where musical talents and prominent speakers from the Anglo Chinese community are showcased. As a sideline to support her cross culture PR events, Yintong has commissioned a hugely popular range of *yin-yang* and national flags, designed cufflinks and lapel badges. These are worn with pride by countless business executives wanting to display their UK-China credentials, including many on China Britain Business Council trade missions.

Creativity

Wishing to develop her new interest in photography with business projects, Yintong has wasted no time during Covid-19 lockdown to consolidate her photographic knowledge. She has completed online photography courses with New York's MoMA and Beijing's Central Fine Art Academy as well as building up an audience through her photography blogs via a Chinese social media platform WeChat. With her sense of creativity and entrepreneurial flare, she has just launched the *Global SinoPhoto Awards* with her co-founder Lynne Bryant, the founder of the renowned Architectural Photography Awards. Once again, the awards will be a first and are open now for submissions until 5 January 2021. Covid-19 restrictions apart, the intention is that prizes will be awarded at her annual Chinese New Year reception. This photography competition is open to anyone interested in Chinese culture, amateur or professional.

Understanding

Yintong tells me that she wants to "bring people together through photography by inviting photographers from all over the world to participate with images of values shared by everyone; a love of life, family and environment while reflecting on an underlying Chinese culture". She would like to build a better understanding of Chinese culture and society today, a culture which has been transported around the world and with a history of over 5,000 years, which goes far beyond Chinese food, styles of architecture and Chinese New Year, and create a legacy of photographs that bear witness to this culture in a world that has become increasingly culturally



With her sense of creativity and entrepreneurial flair, she has just launched the Global SinoPhoto Awards

homogenized. Whatever one thinks of Chinese politics today, its culture is undisputedly rich, fascinating and global.

By extending the award to examples of China culture outside mainland China, the photographs will reveal how Chinese culture has been interpreted by not only the worldwide Chinese diaspora, (for which there are around 45 million first generation Chinese living outside mainland China), but also second and third generation Chinese, not forgetting how other nations and cultures have absorbed Chinese culture into their own cultural heritage. Overall, she hopes that the awards will "connect humanity, strengthen understanding and build communities through competition and exhibitions."

Legacy

Yintong says that she will deem the project a success if the quantity and quality of the submissions are such that she can make these annual awards and establish them as part of the international photographic awards calendar. She adds, with a wry smile, "we are also keen to find enthusiastic sponsors and supporters for this legacy project".

At a time when the West needs to understand China better, this will be a valuable study of the many hidden aspects of Chinese culture and society.

www.sinophoto-awards.com

Theresa Booth is joint chief executive of the Chopsticks Club and founding director of Engage with China Limited
<http://chopsticksclub.com>

SPONSORED COLUMN

Pensions are changing (again!)

By Görkem Gökyiğit, Chartered Financial Planner at Lubbock Fine Wealth Management



From 2028, the age at which individuals can access their pension is set to rise from 55 to 57.

The Government has confirmed its intention to increase the age at which people can access their private pensions. The aim is to set the minimum retirement age to 10 years below the state pension age. This could help reflect trends in longevity, encourage individuals to remain in work longer, and help to ensure that pension savings are used for later life.

What does this mean for you?

The full details are pending. However, depending on your age, you might be forced to wait two years to access benefits if your birthday falls on the 'wrong side' of the cut-off date. This would also give you two more years of pension contributions and investment growth, which could change the size of your pension pot.

A 45-year-old today, with pension savings of £200,000 and making pension contributions of £1,000 per month would have a pension pot of £480,991 by the time they are 55 (assuming a 5% growth per annum). If they continued saving at the same rate for another two years, the pension pot would grow to £555,839 – a staggering difference of £74,848.

What if you would still like to retire at 55?

You still can! It is worth considering adding money into other tax wrappers, such as Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) and General Investment Accounts. These are accessible from any age and can be part of your 'retirement fund'.

What 7 things should you ask yourself about retirement?

It is important that every individual considers the following questions:

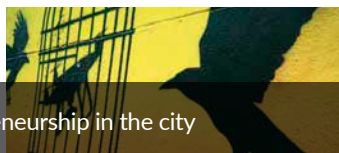
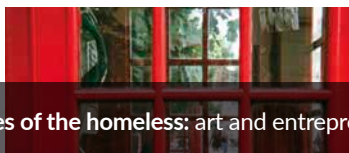
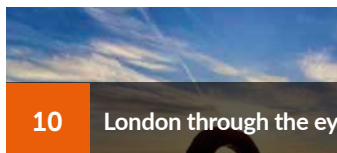
1. What does comfortable retirement look like?
2. Am I making enough provisions?
3. When would I like to retire?
4. Is it possible to improve the investment returns of my pension?
5. Is my pension flexible enough to provide me with a range of retirement options (lump sums, regular income, a guaranteed annuity payment or a combination of all)?
6. What are the charges being applied to my pension?
7. Have I nominated a beneficiary who would receive my pension in the event of my death?

How can we help?

If you require any assistance with your retirement planning and pensions, please contact Görkem Gökyiğit (gorkemgokyigit@lffwm.co.uk).

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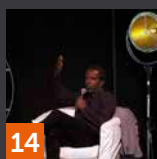
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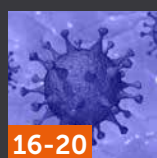
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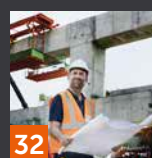
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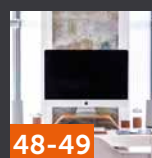
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Front cover: London’s theatreland as it used to be. The centre of the city makes a unique contribution to the UK economy, and indeed to the world’s culture
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