



### Ideas in Action

# Selling hope, wrapped up in t-shirts

Cassandra Postema and Dong Shing Chiu (pictured) are in the business of selling hope, wrapped up in t-shirts called 'Hope Tees'.



Their Hong Kong creative enterprise is called 'Dialog' because it embodies an exchange of conversations between marginalised Asian textile craft wisdom and modern western design. The result is an attractive and fun range of resort apparel, bags and accessories.

Dong Shing Chiu was born in Malaysia's Borneo, grew up in Malaysia and London, and studied fashion with printed textiles there at Central St Martins with Cassandra. She has won accolades throughout Europe and New York with her print designs. Cassandra grew up in Singapore, Japan, Vienna and other cities. She was a New Generation Award winner at London Fashion Week prior to returning to Asia.

Dialog's fashion is purpose-driven and interwoven into their fabric designs are values which embrace both fair trade and recycling. Their design hub produces fashionable products which also help micro businesses in impoverished areas, for example a women's empowerment project in Sham Shui Po, the garment district of Hong Kong.

Their fair-trade fashion label has also developed a recycled fabric trimming which is incorporated into the design of accessories. Some of the people producing the trimming are teenagers who have come off the streets, and drugs, to learn new skills in a 'halfway house' project. The enterprise ensures that producers are paid a price which covers the cost of sustainable incomes for them and provides decent working conditions.

Hope Tees is a Dialog project which began when Cassandra was inspired to design a t-shirt to raise funds for the children of the Asian Tsunami disaster of 2004. Hope Tees now design and produce a t-shirts to raise funds on a project by project basis, in limited editions of 200.

Simply by buying a t-shirt, customers are participating in a dialogue with the producers but this communication can go much further because Hope Tees also has a blog which links Dialog, its consumer and its suppliers.



When the customer spends £10, they are getting much more than a garment in the package.

Crucially, the consumer is also buying a 'story'. Wrapped up in the t-shirt is a description of the project the Hope Tee supports. The benefits to the customer include a feel-good factor which is much more than the skin-deep feeling of the cool cotton fabric. Other consumer benefits include a recyclable packaging tube which is consistent with the values and objectives of the company and its customers.

So what Dialog are really selling, in this neat little eco-friendly package, is hope. Hope for the future of marginalised culture, hope for the future of the planet, and hope for a fairer balance of trade between producer and consumer.

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### Links

[More about Dialog](#)

[More about Hope Tees](#)

[More about 'What are you selling, really?'](#)

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