

## **Good Design: Mekong Design Selection** **~Travel to Cambodia~**

### **Ryu Kozeki Design Studio (RKDS)**

#### **Mr. Ryuichi Kozeki**

#### **●Collaboration with Cambodian Company**

After my design proposal was screened, the matching with a Cambodian company was made and led to my first visit to Cambodia. This is my first time to collaborate with an emerging country and while there are certain concerns about expectations and mutual comprehension, the important purpose of this trip is to take the first step.

Prior to my trip, my understanding was that this collaboration project was mutually agreed upon and so I prepared sample materials for our first meeting. The samples were handmade from a cloth that can easily be bought in Japan. The packaging was made by print materials and I made it to closely represent the final product as a visual aid. I sensed that I would only have limited time to meet and discuss the project; therefore it was an unusual experience for me to move forward in a rushed time frame.

#### **●Preliminary Meeting and Discussion**

Wathan Artisans Cambodia is located in the capital city of Phnom Penh in a site by a temple. The shop, workshop and office is located in the same place where the atmosphere is very calm. The textile and wood carving products of the company uses Cambodian traditional patterns and all of its artisans have some kind of disability. The company was established with the mission to support the careers of the disabled and create products that are made meticulously in high quality and standard.

My design proposal can easily be produced from scrap materials with minimal risk and most of all it will lead to contributing Cambodian society. As a project, I believe that it is simple enough to take on but rather than discussing the product design and proposal, we discussed the project details and how to progress with the project. The preliminary meeting went smoothly and I was able to take some photos of the shop and the artisans making their crafts. Since my proposal will touch on the background of the company's history, I was pleased to be able to take photos that can be used for future promotion.

#### **●The Outcome of the First Meeting**

The main and tangible purpose for this first visit is to mutually agree upon the course of action, terms of this project, and to conclude contracts. Through the discussion, I was able to learn that the company has had experience working with a designer, but never to a point where contractual agreements have been made. My wish is for the company to invest in design so that they can

experience success of this business style. I handed them a draft of the contract and an estimate of the project, however there were some difficulties in accepting new business customs and terms. I ended up returning back to Japan with the hopes that this project can continue in positive light.

### ●The Purpose and the Role of the Project

The aftermath of recent conflicts in the country have led there to be little defined age groups, many handicapped persons, and a developing economy which left a deep impression while on this trip. In order to successfully turn design into business, costs and time are important factors. However, I believe that the power of design is capable of breaking the barriers. I believe that the success of this project will further encourage many other Cambodian companies to take challenge in collaboration opportunities with design. This is why professional designers often investigate the potential of designs from different perspectives.

If we only look at the progress of this first trip alone, a concrete goal has not been made, but this is just the start line. Even though the road of success in this project is still unknown, there is a first step to everything. Of course, the focus should not only be on the start of this project but aiming toward accomplishing the goal of this project.

**For the original report in Japanese with pictures, please view this link:**

[http://www.asean.or.jp/ja/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Cambodia-Report\\_RKDS\\_Mr.-Kozeki1.pdf](http://www.asean.or.jp/ja/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Cambodia-Report_RKDS_Mr.-Kozeki1.pdf)