Foossa is a consultancy focused on innovation strategy and community-centered design.
User Experience
Strategic Storytelling
Community Centered Design
Community Management
Movement Building
Lee-Sean Huang

Lee-Sean Huang is the cofounder and creative director of Foossa, a community-centered design consultancy. As a designer, strategist, and storyteller, he collaborates with communities and organizations across the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia to solve social innovation challenges.

His work ranges from redesigning the experience of employee health and wellness at a Fortune 500 corporation to helping agencies of the United Nations better manage their institutional knowledge and refresh their public stories in changing times. He has taught senior organizers of the SEIU (Service Employees International Union) ways to rethink labor organizing in a networked age, advised a major social network on the multiple and shifting meanings of friendship, and conducted research supported by the European Union to build tools to scale online citizen debate and deliberation.

Lee-Sean's career in designing participation and building movements began when he was a student at Harvard, where he studied Government and engaged as a community organizer and human rights activist. He later honed his campaigning and organizing skills running online-centered campaigns for Avaaz and Human Rights Watch. Prior to co-founding Foossa, Lee-Sean was the founding member of the design team at Purpose, a public-benefit consultancy that builds movements and new power models to tackle the world’s biggest problems.

Lee-Sean regularly teaches and writes about community-centered design and social innovation. He is a faculty member at the MFA Design for Social Innovation Program at the School of Visual Arts. He regularly gives workshops and keynotes on community-centered design and social innovation at conferences around the world and at universities including Cornell, the New School, New York University, the College of Staten Island, UCLA, and the University of Hawai’i. He has written for publications including GOOD Magazine, Fast Company, and the Huffington Post. He contributed to Wisdom Hackers, an anthology of essays by artists, activists and entrepreneurs published by The Pigeonhole in 2014 that explored deep questions of contemporary life. He was also co-author of the political science debate textbook Freedom Vs. Security: The Struggle For Balance published by Central European University Press in 2009.

In addition to a bachelor's degree in Government from Harvard, Lee-Sean holds a masters degree from ITP, the Interactive Telecommunications Program at New York University. He currently serves as president of the ITP alumni association. He also serves as a founding trustee and treasurer of the Awesome Foundation New York, an international network of donors who give micro-grants to forward the cause of awesome in the universe and volunteers as webmaster of the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program Alumni Association of New York (JETAAANY). He also teaches and trains capoeira, an Afro-Brazilian martial art disguised as a dance, at the New York Capoeira Center.
One definition of a designer is someone who creates meaning.

Cheryl Heller cites Lee-Sean Huang’s definition of a designer in her article “Where Design is Going and How to Be There,” published in How Magazine and by the AIGA. Cheryl is the Founding Chair of the first MFA program in Design for Social Innovation at SVA, where Lee-Sean is also a faculty member.

http://www.aiga.org/where-design-is-going-and-how-to-be-there/
What is your Minimum Viable Bureaucracy?

In July 2015, Lee-Sean gave a workshop called “Building Networks for Good” at CAPS 2015, the international event on collective awareness platforms for sustainability and social innovation, in Brussels, Belgium.

http://leesean.net/building-networks-for-good/
In order to innovate forward, we must first look backwards at history and around our current context.

In December 2014, Lee-Sean gave a keynote at Impacto: The Future of Business conference at Itaú Cultural in São Paulo, Brazil. He talked about the importance of different perspectives in creativity and innovation.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OF7nsDwM4NM
Presentation in English after a brief introduction in Portuguese
Besides stimulating my creativity, immersion in a different culture and working in a foreign language have heightened my sense of mindfulness and empathy, reminded me of the virtue of humility, and taught me a few things about what it means to innovate.

Lee-Sean shared lessons learned about design and innovation while he was working in Brazil.

Designers are respectful of context. We’re respectful of the languages people are speaking. But there’s also nothing we won’t touch.

It’s an act of courage to step outside of your world and into somebody else’s, especially if you don’t know how everything works there.

Good designers model that behavior for others.

Lee-Sean was interviewed by Andrew Benedict-Nelson of the Insight Labs as part of their Law 2023 project, which explored the future of the legal profession.

The Insight Labs is a pro bono strategy development think tank for non-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations and government agencies.

http://www.law2023.org/interview-huang/
I think of UX design as both applied craft and liberal art...UX designers have the ability to craft and make things in their particular area of expertise...but the discipline is fundamentally about people in social and environmental contexts.

UX design is sort of like rhetoric in a classical liberal arts education. It builds ways to frame our understanding of something with the aim of motivating and persuading people (“users”) around a certain point of view.

Lee-Sean Huang explains his take on the potential of UX (User Experience) design in an interview about a UX for Good design challenge in Rwanda.

UX for Good is an effort to push design as far as it can go: past forms, interactions and experiences to complex human systems, and beyond attractive, effective and elegant to deeply impactful.

http://www.uxforgood.com/designing-understanding/
“Hook them at the right time...

Storytelling is an ancient art form that takes a lifetime to master, so I’m not sure I have any secrets that are unknown to others. One thing as it relates to storytelling and social change, especially in digital and transmedia contexts, is the importance of simplicity and sequencing. Complex stories can be incredibly emotionally engaging and moving, but for a story to really stick, it needs a simple hook and logline so people can understand it.

Think about the end first, and then start with a simple hook. Start with a mystery. Or drop us right in the middle of the action. But don’t milk the “crisis” too much, or else people figure that out and tune out. It’s all about the progressive reveal of a story.

This is especially important in interactive media where the technology allows for so much abundance of content and sensory overload. Also, if you want to apply the story to an entire community, the simplicity helps the message spread. Even really simple stories can work on multiple levels, for “new initiates,” and seasoned veterans of a community.

In 2012, Lee-Sean shared his insights about storytelling with The Narrative Renewal Project, an initiative to reinvent the ways in which communities see themselves.

https://narrativerenewalproject.wordpress.com/2012/11/12/hook-them-at-the-right-time/
We call it 'New Giving'—you don't have to be a Rockefeller or have your name on a building to be able to do this sort of thing. It's accessible to anybody.

Lee-Sean discussed the Awesome Foundation in entrepreneur.com.

http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/224251

The Awesome Foundation is worldwide network of people devoted to forwarding the interest of awesomeness in the universe through monthly micro-grants to artistic, entrepreneurial, and community projects. Lee-Sean is a founding trustee, treasurer, and dean emeritus of the New York chapter of the Awesome Foundation.
We’re rogues giving to rogues. It’s misfit money for the weird and wonderful

Lee-Sean has also talked about his work with the Awesome Foundation with the New York Times and with Ethos Paper.


http://www.ethospaper.com/2015/07/awesome-foundation/

Awesome Foundation NYC founding trustees: Catherine White, Jesse Chan Norris and Lee-Sean Huang.
Make positive use of negative space.

Silence is negative space in time.

Lee-Sean gave an Ignite talk entitled “It’s Cool to be Flat” at the O’Reilly Web 2.0 Expo New York in 2009, years before the “flat design” trend swept the tech industry.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgUBvsW9ZQU