

ARCHITECTURE

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Legacy of Our Times

Architecture reflects history and our social values. With over a hundred years of heritage, Hong Kong has many master structures that reflect these golden ages.

Hong Kong was a British colony from 1842 to 1997. The British left behind a number of colonial buildings built in the 19th and early 20th century. Most are of Victorian and Edwardian styles. To cater to the rainy and humid subtropical climate of Hong Kong, adaptive features were incorporated in buildings including verandas and air grids unique to colonies. Completed in 1919, the Headquarters Block of the Central Police Station is a great example. Completed in 1897, the second generation Hong Kong Club building was a Victorian classic nicknamed 'Victorian wedding cake', it was one of the last examples of Renaissance architecture remaining in Hong Kong. Completed in 1937, the Maryknoll Convent School (Primary Section) building reflected the free neo-tudor style that incorporates different architectural features including Art Deco, Romanesque, Neo-Georgian and Gothic Revival.

During the colonial days, architectural firms were mainly British. Palmer and Turner Hong Kong (now named P & T Architects and Engineers) have been in Hong Kong for over a century and bore witness to our architectural heritage with projects

including the HSBC Headquarters completed in 1935 and Connaught Building. From the 30s to 50s, Hong Kong saw the emergence of Chinese architects. After the war, Chinese Renaissance style became popular. Aw Boon Haw's Haw Par Mansion incorporated a blend of Western, Chinese and Asian styles. Inside the mansion are coloured glass windows from Italy and a ceiling designed with Indian and Burmese influence. 'Tiger Tower' and Buddhist 'Eighteen Levels of Hell' relief located in the outside Tiger Balm Garden is full of Chinese mythical elements. In addition, the Tang-style Chi Lin Nunnery and Nan Lian Garden complex is a classic among Chinese architecture.

Another important part of our architectural heritage is our public housing. With the influx of Chinese immigrants and rise in local population post-war, the government began the construction of large public housing estates to satisfy needs for affordable homes. To keep costs low, public housing estates were mainly of minimalistic design with maximum use of space. Dubbed 'Father of Public Housing', Michael Wright spearheaded the first generation of 'H-shaped' public housing in Shek Kip Mei with private kitchen and lavatory, subsequently affecting local public housing policies and later became the design model of public housing overseas. People will remember the distinctive cylindrical structure of the first floor blocks of Lai Tak Tsuen in which the Hong Kong Housing Authority named after Wright's Cantonese name.

The Architectural Services Department also built many landmarks. Hong Kong Coliseum resembles an inverted pyramid and gained international fame during the 80s. In recent years, the department designs buildings in a cost-effective and environmentally responsible manner with the aim of improving the quality of living. Chinese elements have been infused into the building

design of Diamond Hill Crematorium. Mourners ascend a circular stairway as if transiting from earth to heaven with their beloved and later greeted by nature which imbues a sense of serenity. Completed in 2015, Po Leung Kuk Ho Sau Nan Primary School breaks from traditional school design. Its white and brown walls combined with timber structures and vertical greening provides a natural environment conducive to studying.

Besides local public facilities, commercial buildings are also influenced by modernistic architecture style with focus on simplicity, geometry and function. Along the two sides of Victoria Harbour are many stunning landmarks. Designed by Palmer and Turner Hong Kong and led by architect James Kinoshita, Connaught Centre's simple lines as well as practicality and aesthetics of its iconic circular windows were the talk of the town. Architect I.M. Pei's Bank of China Tower takes inspiration from the growth patterns of bamboo which represented the symbol of hope and revitalisation in Chinese culture. Norman Foster's fourth generation HSBC Main Building pushed all the supporting structure to the outside of the building in order to maximise the interior office space. Hong Kong International Airport's environmental and cost-effective designs offer tourists a comfortable and uplifting experience during transits.

These landmarks bear witness to the changing skyline of Hong Kong and improved lifestyle of local citizens, results of the relentless pursuit of excellence by architects. Pertinent conservation policies are needed to preserve these historical buildings so that this legacy can be passed to the next generation.

Chi Lin Nunnery/ Nan Lian Garden

Built in 1934, Chi Lin Nunnery is a large temple complex standing next to the later meticulously landscaped Nan Lian Garden.

The team at the nunnery worked with experts from China and Japan throughout the renovation of Chi Lin Nunnery which began in 1989. The revamped complex reinterpreted traditional architectural wisdoms, such as the bracket supporting system and tenon joint technique using modern architectural technology. The elegant wooden structure, built using modern science and technology, incorporated the ethos of ancient Chinese architecture and fine arts. The whole design and layout created a harmonious and natural environment. In the old days, there are many beautiful gardens built by wealthy businessmen open to the public. Despite its religious significance, Nan Lian Garden is open to the public and offers an oasis in our busy city.

“As a Buddhist, Chi Lin Nunnery and Nan Lian Garden are crucial to me. Chi Lin Nunnery and Nan Lian Garden imitate the architectural style in Tang Dynasty with rich cultural and historical characteristics.



...Simple design enhances solemn ambience in the temple. I always tell young people to go to the Nan Lian Garden as a Tang Dynasty history lesson and to purify minds amidst the city buzz.” — Stanley Wong

Colonial Buildings



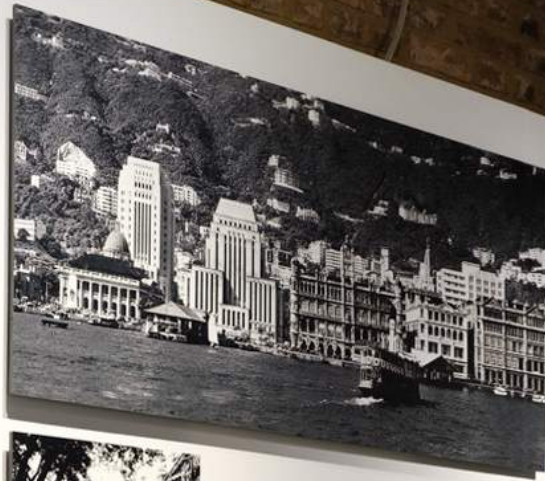
In the 19th and early 20th century, Hong Kong was like a mini Europe with the British leaving behind many impressive European structures. The Headquarters Block of the Central Police Station is a great example. Completed in 1919, the engraved initials 'G' and 'R' of King George V can still be seen on the outer wall. The grand Roman arches and Greek columns accentuate the solemn atmosphere of the police station. Completed in 1897, the 2nd generation of Hong Kong Club building was a Victorian classic nicknamed 'Victorian wedding cake'. It was one of the last examples of Renaissance architecture remaining in Hong Kong. Completed in 1937, the Maryknoll Convent School (Primary Section) building reflected the free neo-tudor style that incorporates different architectural features including Art Deco, Romanesque, Neo-Georgian and Gothic Revival.



“The remaining British colonial style buildings witnessed the history of Hong Kong. It is a pity that they are fragile against the economic and urban development, and gradually disappearing in our city. I hope the public can discover the beauty and cultural value in these Hong Kong Buildings.” — Stanley Wong



When I was young, my father brought me to the top floor of Gloucester Tower to have tea. As a kid, I found the display windows enormous and stunning, like window shopping on New York's boulevards or the Bond Street in London, or a scene from Breakfast at Tiffany's. It is a shame the buildings designed by the English were demolished. Otherwise, the coastline of Hong Kong might have been comparable with the Bund of Shanghai.



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香港國際機場 HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

香港國際機場的屋頂設計，以波浪為靈感，其高度和寬度會隨著建築的結構秩序和高度而變化。屋頂的結構秩序和高度會隨著建築的結構秩序和高度而變化。

Hong Kong International Airport is a world-class airport. The roof design is inspired by waves, with its height and width varying according to the structural order and height of the building. The structural order and height of the building vary according to the structural order and height of the building.

The grain and angle of the structure provides instant orientation both inside the building and also from the outside.

“Hong Kong International Airport is an architectural marvel we are proud of. The key highlights extend beyond its engineered aesthetics but also its diverse, efficient and convenient facilities and services. The architect’s design and planning is certainly ingenious.”

ARCHITECTURE 建築 | VERY HONG KONG VERY HONG KONG



香港
國際機場

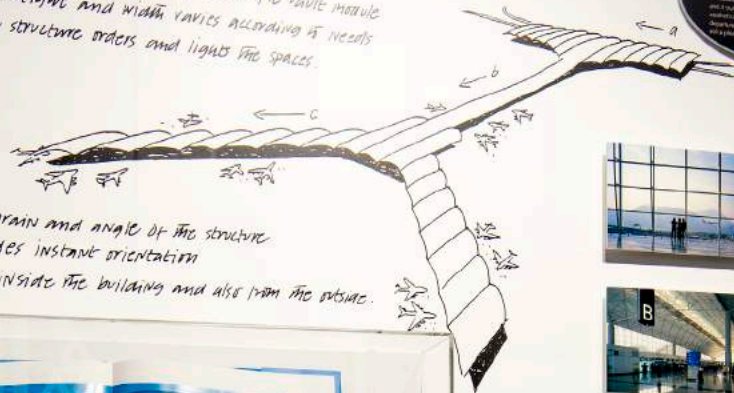
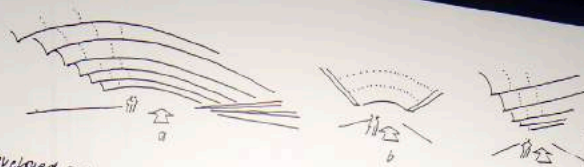
HONG KONG
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT



香港國際機場的建築設計，由著名建築師諾曼·福斯特（Norman Foster）所設計。該建築以其獨特的「大翼」設計而聞名，其外觀酷似一隻展翅的巨鳥。建築師在設計過程中，充分考慮了香港的氣候特點，將自然光線引入室內，並利用大翼的結構提供天然的通風效果。此外，建築師還巧妙地將機場的跑道和滑行道融入整體設計中，使整個機場呈現出一種和諧統一的美感。

The roof is developed out of the simple vault module.
The height and width varies according to needs.
The structure orders and lights the spaces.

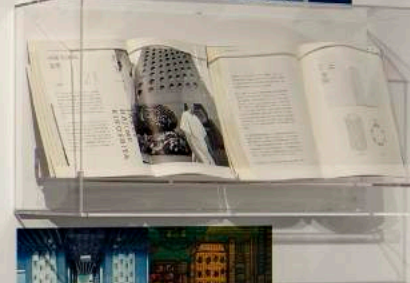
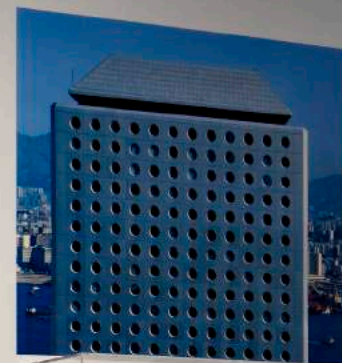
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建築 ARCHITECTURE



Lord Norman Foster
香港國際機場
Norman Foster
Hong Kong
International Airport



“The Hong Kong International Airport has been selected the outstanding airport of the world for consecutive years and it truly deserves this. In addition to architectural aesthetics, efficiency is greatly appreciated. Today, departure from the Hong Kong International Airport is still a pleasant experience.” — Alan Chan

Herzog & de Meuron

M+ Building

Currently under construction, M+ is a much-anticipated museum of visual culture located in the West Kowloon Cultural District. The work of Swiss architectural firm Herzog & de Meuron, it is an example of contemporary architecture encompasses an efficient system of space, facilities and functions. With the existing underlying railway line that bisects the site, the building has a complex configuration. The 'inverted T' design is made up of two components—a semi-transparent tower housing a library, archive, learning centre, museum office and restaurant etc., and a horizontal slab with 17,000 square metres of exhibition space, three cinemas, a lecture theatre, performance space etc., the building also features a LED facade for the display of moving image works of art. M+ will be home for 20th and 21st century art, design, architecture and moving image, further establishing Hong Kong as a global epicentre of modern visual culture.

“Looking at the architectural model of the West Kowloon Cultural District, I believe that everyone is looking forward to witness the completion of the contemporary building structures, eager for participating in the space and curious to know how it brings new arts and hope to Hong Kong.” — Alan Chan



Aw Boon Haw

Haw Par Mansion

The Haw Par Mansion was built in 1935 by 'Tiger Balm' merchant Aw Boon Haw and listed as a Grade I historic building in Hong Kong. The mansion of this private residence was built in the eclectic architectural style with a blend of Western influence. Inside the 4-storey tall, 2,000 sq. metres palace-like mansion is a Chinese style living room adorned with beautiful painted glass windows from Italy, carvings and mouldings. The ceiling was embellished with golden crosses showing Indian and Burmese influence. Outside the round moon gate main entrance is a luscious Chinese garden. Once a popular tourist destination, the white hexagonal 'Tiger Tower' and Buddhist 'Eighteen Levels of Hell' relief formed a distinct part of the collective memory of many Hong Kong people.

"I like The Haw Par Mansion as much as I hate it. I was afraid of the ghostly pictures of hell decoration but it also brings sweet memories as my then girlfriend lived on Tai Hang Road. It was where we had our dates." — Alan Chan



Hong Kong Architectural Department

Public Architecture



“Raymond Fung has led and inspired several generations of government architects team. He initiated the projects of Wetland Park, crematory sites, libraries and other public facilities adhered to minimalistic style. Without consortia’s predomination and controversy, he creates simple and practical designs, demonstrating a purified living experience to show how simple life can be.” — Stanley Wong

The Architectural Services Department is a government agency providing advisory services and facilities development for government-owned and government-funded facilities. Comprised of architects, site staff and technicians, the department designs buildings in a cost-effective and environmentally responsible manner with the aim of improving the quality of living. The multi-awarded department is the mastermind behind some of the most innovative contemporary architecture in Hong Kong, benefitting people from all walks of life.



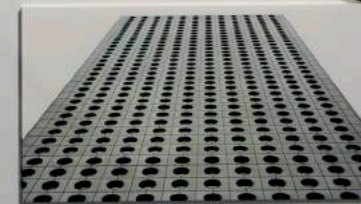
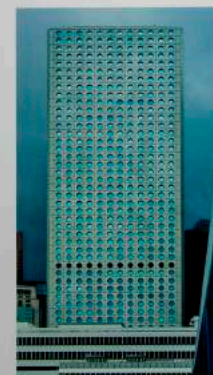
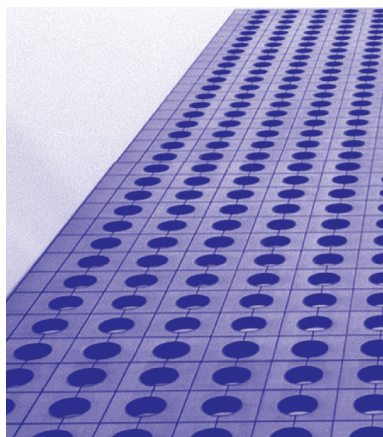
James Kinoshita

Connaught Centre

Completed in 1972, Connaught Centre with its iconic circular windows was one of the tallest buildings in Hong Kong. The site was formed by reclamation, costing over HKD 258 million, making it the most expensive land at the time. The building was designed by the team at Palmer and Turner Group and led by partner James Kinoshita for Hong Kong Land. This 52-storey building is an example of modernist architecture. The design incorporated the high-rise structural systems commonly adopted in American skyscrapers. The external envelope is a structural wall and hence the circular windows, which showcase maximum opening area for light to penetrate into the building, were at the same time used to maintain the structural integrity. Now known as Jardine House, with its original mosaic exterior wall being covered by aluminum curtain wall, Connaught Centre remains an important part of Hong Kong's urban landscape often seen as the background in many local films.

*“From my point of view,
Connaught Centre is a classic.
Even if time passes, it is still
beautiful in my eyes. Not only
have the circles become an iconic
symbol, the spatial construction
also suggests an entrance into a
realm of contemporary art.”*

— Alan Chan



Palmer & Turner Hong Kong HSBC Main Building (1935-1981)

The marvel of steel that is the HSBC main building today is actually the fourth building that houses the headquarters of this financial group. The very first building (1865) and the second (1886) are of classic architectural style. The third building designed by Palmer & Turner Group adopted the Chicago school style and built with granite and imported marbles. The fourth generation was completed in 1986. Built by the British architect Lord Norman Foster, he pushed all the supporting structure to the outside of the building in order to maximise the interior office space and an incredibly deep atrium. The curtain walls let natural light permeate through to the office and the lobby. The public lobby is accessible to visitors and guests and has become a popular picnic spot for domestic workers on weekends. The HSBC main building and the pair of bronze lions constitute part of Hong Kong's unique landscape.

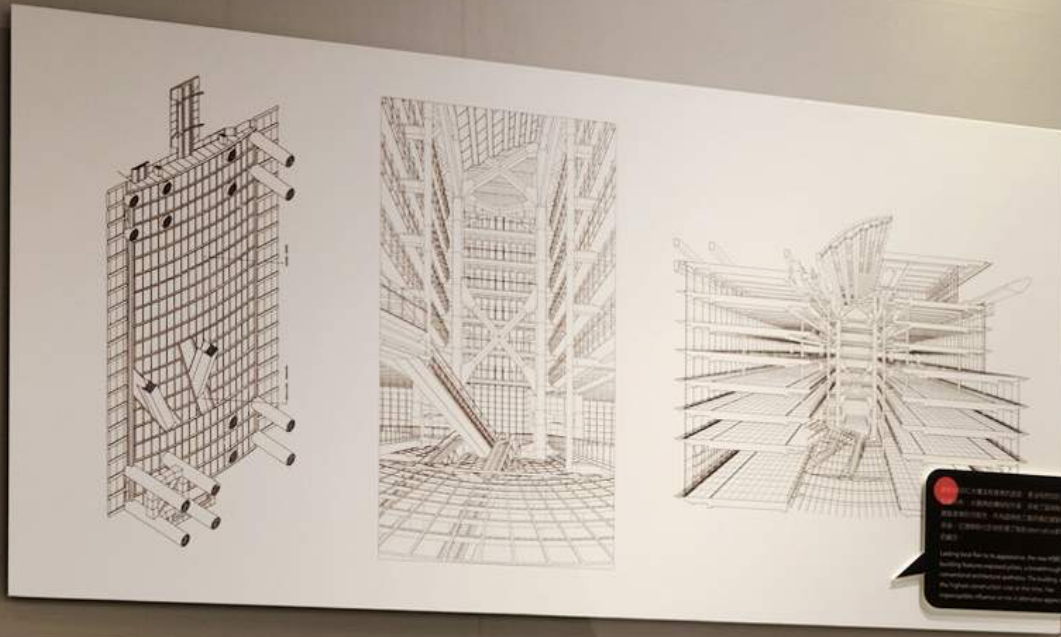
“Lacking local flair to its appearance, the new HSBC building features exposed pillars, a breakthrough in conventional architectural aesthetics. The building, with the highest construction cost at the time, has imperceptible influence on me in alternative appreciation.” — Stanley Wong

Norman Foster HSBC Main Building (1985 -)





THE HSBC BUILDING IN HONG KONG IS AN EMBLEMATIC PIECE OF ARCHITECTURE. IT SURVIVED THE TEST OF TIME UNTIL TODAY. A WALK THROUGH ITS SPACE FELT LIKE AN ENTRANCE INTO A REALM OF ART. AS MY PARENTS TOOK ME TO TAKE PICTURES IN FRONT OF THE OLD HSBC'S BRONZE LIONS, THE UNIQUE COLONIAL MURALS AND STRUCTURE OF THE BUILDING LEFT ME WITH A VERY STRONG IMPRESSION.



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"I really admire the fact that such an emblematic piece of architecture gets to survive the test of time until today. A walk through its space felt like an entrance into a realm of art. As my parents took me to take pictures in front of The Old HSBC's bronze lions, the unique colonial murals and structure of the building left me with a very strong impression." — Alan Chan

I.M. Pei

Bank of China Tower

The Bank of China Tower stands 70 storeys tall, reaching a height of 369 metres. It was the tallest building in Asia at the time of its opening in May 1990 with significant cultural importance. Architect I.M. Pei was adamant in producing an architectural language that drew inspiration from Chinese culture and The Bank of China Tower totally fulfilled this objective. The building is an ensemble of four shafts of different heights, all united by the tessellated triangular form. The exterior mimics the growth patterns of bamboo, representing the symbol of hope and revitalisation in the Chinese culture. At the top of each shaft is a glass ceiling spanning across 7 storeys, opening up the indoor space to the spectacular view of Victoria Harbour. The asymmetrical tower remains as one of the most iconic skyscrapers in Hong Kong.

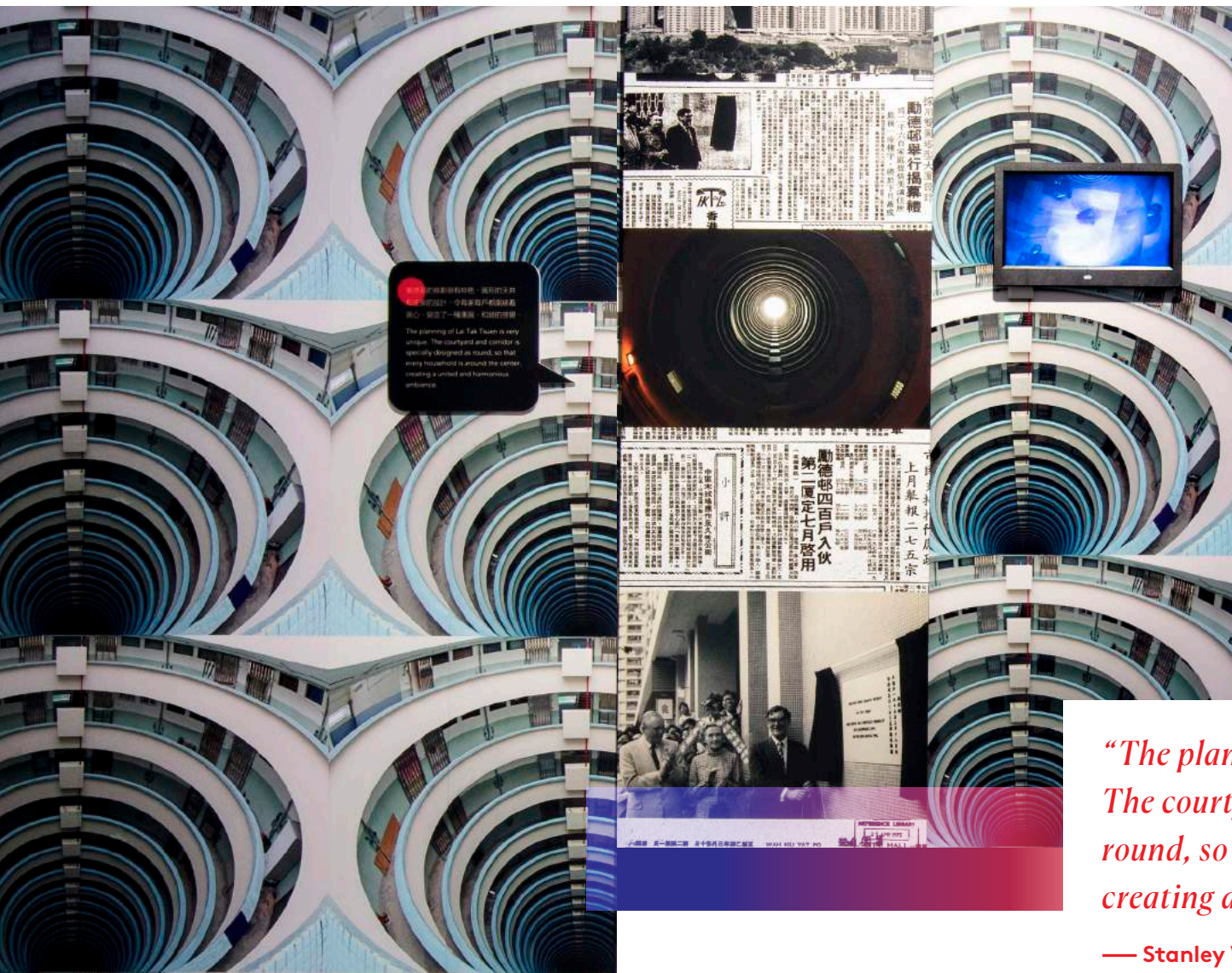
“The Bank of China, designed by Ieoh Ming Pei, looks like a contemporary triangular building at first glance. Indeed, it symbolizes the growth of bamboo, a kind of traditional Chinese element. It is certainly an outstanding example of a mixture of western modernity and Chinese tradition.” — Stanley Wong



“The Bank of China, a masterpiece of Ieoh Ming Pei, of which appearance is gorgeous. I don’t understand how he could persuade the client adapting its triangular design, traditionally a controversial shape in geomancy, however, he did it!” — Alan Chan

Wong Cho Tong

Lai Tak Tsuen



In the early years, the Hong Kong Housing Authority partnered with renowned architects with the aim of providing well-designed affordable housing for low-income families. Designed by Wong Cho Tong Architects & Engineers, Lai Tak Tsuen is named after the English architect Alec Michael John Wright (or Wu Lai Tak in Cantonese) of the Works Bureau as recognition of his contribution to affordable housing in Hong Kong since 1938. With construction completed in mid-70s, the whole estate consists of 8 blocks, each with 27 storeys. Perhaps the most notable feature is the cylindrical structure of the first four blocks. When looking up from the atrium of the building, the 27 floors form a spellbinding layer of concentric blue circles – a geometric symmetry especially pleasing to the eye. The residents of the high level rectangular Blocks 5 to 8 get to enjoy the spectacular view of Victoria Harbour, which is rare for a public housing estate.

“The planning of Lai Tak Tsuen is very unique. The courtyard and corridor is specially designed as round, so that every household is around the center, creating a united and harmonious ambience.”

— Stanley Wong

Zaha Hadid

Winning Proposal for The Peak Hong Kong



“Although it is a pity that Zaha Hadid’s peak project has not been officially implemented, the concept has given her a worldwide reputation and became an architecture legend in Hong Kong.”

— Stanley Wong

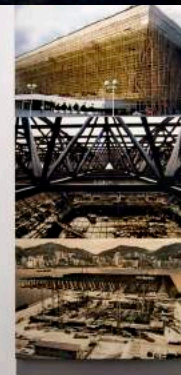


The late Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid was known for her unparalleled vision and unique aesthetics. Dubbed the ‘queen of curves’, she established herself as the uncompromising architect for ‘unbuildable’ forms. She left her mark in the local landscape with the Hong Kong Polytechnic University Jockey Club Innovation Tower. Her lesser-known project but perhaps the most important project was her design for The Peak in Hong Kong (1983) which was her first demonstration of her ‘unique’ style. Despite winning the competition, her proposal was never built due to the extremely high costs involved. Hadid’s idea for The Peak’s clubhouse centered on the creation of a ‘man-made polished granite mountain’. She proposed excavating the hills to form a site and using the excavated rock to build artificial cliffs. The leisure club would comprise distinctive horizontal layers. Planes of the walls, floors, and ceilings would be jointed at odd angles, creating atypical forms. The jagged edges extend outwards to the cliff like a violent extension of the mountain itself.

S.H. Pau

Hong Kong Coliseum

Hong Kong Coliseum has witnessed the glorious concerts days of Hong Kong from the 80s. Inaugurated in 1983, the Coliseum was designed by the Architectural Services Department. The then Assistant Director of the Department S.H. Pau was appointed the project leader since the early construction stage. The whole construction cost HKD 140 million. Looking from the outside, the Coliseum resembles an inverted pyramid. With no indoor columns, it is designed to house as many audience as possible. Its flexible stages make the Coliseum an outstanding venue for sports events and concerts. The four-sided stage provides unobstructed views for an audience of 12,500. Entertainers who have the good fortune to hold concerts there are among the A-listers, serving as a benchmark in the industry.



Simon Kwan

Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (1981-2010)



The main campus of the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Art was designed by local firm Simon Kwan and Associates in a 1981 design competition. Due to the extensive sewage pipelines below the building site, only two triangular piece of land could provide the stable foundation for the main buildings. As a result, a triangle motif can be seen repeatedly throughout the buildings in different variations. The concrete block is punctuated with rows of geometric windows. Outside the building, an ensemble of triangular volumes made of blue metal bars lean towards the main building, resulting in a dynamic urban landmark. The angular concrete hulk hosts a myriad of refined interior spaces for entertainment, producing talents for the local entertainment industry year after year. In 2010, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Amphitheatre has disrupted the wholeness and the aesthetics of the complex.



Alec Michael John Wright/ Gordon Brown/ Alan Fitch/ Ron Philips

Hong Kong City Hall

Rebuilt after the war, the second generation and current City Hall established a rational and down-to-earth design philosophy for government buildings. Sitting in the heart of the city, this Grade 1 historic building was completed in 1962 and consisted of a high and a low block, memorial garden and a piazza. Together with Star Ferry, Queen's Pier and adjacent areas, City Hall became a popular open space area for public activities. Spearheaded by Alec Michael John Wright, the initial design was done by HKU's Faculty of Architecture Professor Gordon Brown. Designed by British architects Alan Fitch and Ron Philips, the design reflects an influence by the Bauhaus school with the focus on clean lines and function-oriented architecture. The granite used in the ground level facade of City Hall was excavated from Diamond Hill. The upper level is made out of tiles of white concrete. City Hall is regarded as a cost efficient and simplistic classic.



“Among the buildings in Hong Kong, my favorite is City Hall, the building which Hong Kong people grew up with in the 60s-70s. As a representation of modernist architecture, City Hall is functional but not luxurious. Its modest and implicit aesthetics won my heart. I strongly believe a good construction of space lies beyond its appearance; it should let you feel a sense of pride and belonging as you bask in the glorious lighting within.” — Stanley Wong

Alec Michael John Wright

Shek Kip Mei Resettlement Estates



The first generation of public housing in Hong Kong was built initially to re-accommodate the victims of the Shek Kip Mei Fire in 1953. Mei Ho House built in 1963 is the last remaining example of an 'H-shape' building in a single-block configuration. Aiming to provide new homes for victims within the shortest time, the residential building is of simple structure with practicality in mind. It featured two wings of domestic cubicles connected by a cross bridge. Residents had to go out to the bridge to use the communal sanitary and washing facilities; cooking and laundry are done in the common corridors. Classrooms and retail shops were located at rooftop and ground floor respectively, wooden blinds were replaced by glass windows to improve natural lighting. It has proven that the open space design of these housing estates fostered a close bond among neighbours, made great improvement for the livelihood of grassroot citizens. The public housing designed under the leadership of Wright introduced private kitchen and lavatory. Being called the 'Wright Principle', it advocated living spaces with privacy and dignity, and became the standard of public housing in the future.