

Enjoy Life • Enjoy Design

Steve Leung : in his own words



Company motto of Steve Leung Designers Ltd displayed on an office wall

“Enjoy Life • Enjoy Design” is the company motto of Steve Leung Designers Ltd, a well known interior design practice in Hong Kong established by veteran architect and interior designer Mr Steve Leung Chi-tien. An interview was held with Mr Steve Leung on 29 October 2009 at his Hong Kong office, during which he talked with editors of the HKIA Journal on various topics including his own background and experience, his design practice and approach, his views on the practice of interior architecture and design in Hong Kong, and on the education and training of architects and designers. The following is an edited summary of his views on the main topics discussed.

Background and experience

I set up my first practice with a partner in 1987. When the partnership ended in 1997, I decided to re-structure my operation, and I set up Steve Leung Architects and Steve Leung Designers. Two considerations had led to this decision: First, I had been very interested in interior work since university, and second, if I continued to work on architectural projects only, I figured the prospect would be quite limited, since there were too many constraints for architectural practice in Hong Kong. I did not want to set up an architectural firm and work on interior projects, since there would be a lack of focus. I was also thinking of entering the mainland market, and I realised that if I entered as an architectural firm, I would be limited on what I could practise due to licensing requirements, whereas the control might be less stringent if I entered as an architectural and interior firm.

Then, soon after I re-structured in 1997, the market turned really bad, and the architectural workload was seriously affected. Originally, I started with 90% architectural and 10% interior work, but today the ratio is over 95% interior work. This change had happened due to a combination of market trend, and the satisfaction, income and recognition which I had gained from my interior work. Therefore I could see no reason for choosing the more difficult path of doing only architectural work.

I still hope to keep one part of my practice as architecture. In fact, each year I still do one or two architectural projects, but I would only choose projects which have potential for me to exercise my creativity. Perhaps when I approach semi-retirement in ten years I might revert to doing architectural work again, but this would certainly only be houses or small projects, and not large-scale development which I think I would neither have the resources nor energy to undertake.



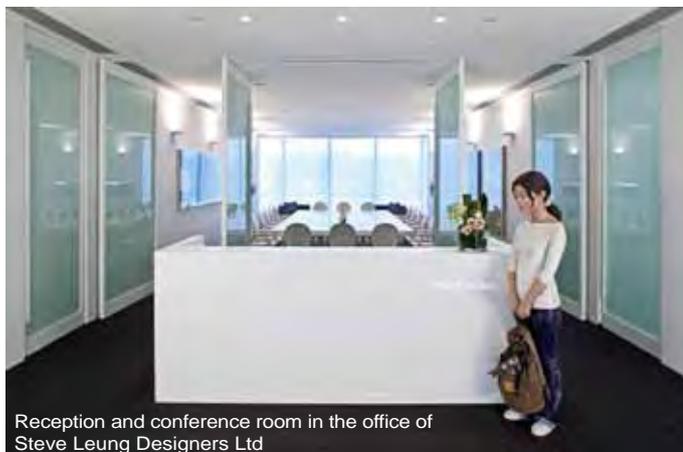
Characteristics of interior design practice

Interior design projects generally have a shorter timeframe, and therefore they can offer a higher level of satisfaction for a designer to be able to see a project completed in a much shorter time. In my ten years of working in architectural practice, I have only had perhaps two or three satisfactory projects, but with the same opportunity, effort or luck, I could have ten satisfactory interior projects in a year, and hence a much higher level of satisfaction. Another important characteristic is the entry level. In Hong Kong, it is very difficult to set up an architectural firm and get good commissions. Even in my previous practice with around 60 people, the kind of projects we could get were only small to medium-size, since the big projects would all go to the super-big or multi-national firms. Therefore, interior design can offer a lower entry level for young firms or designers to get better commissions and to demonstrate their ability within a short time.

Interior design can also be appreciated more easily by anyone. It is like comparing pop music to opera; most people can appreciate pop music and therefore it has a larger audience, but then opera or classical music has higher durability and greater significance in the long term, like architecture. Not many singers can sing both pop music and opera, and if you can do that I guess it is very fortunate indeed.

Company structure

Our head office is in Hong Kong, and we have offices in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Our staff count is around 120 in Hong Kong and 300 including the other offices. I know all the projects and I do oversee all of them, especially review of the design. We do not have any core projects but there are some projects which I would spend more time on, whether due to my interest, or a more demanding client. We have two main teams in Hong Kong which focus on property development work and hospitality work respectively. Most of our hospitality projects are done in Hong Kong and the mainland offices work mainly on property development projects. We also have a design and research team which focuses in research. The work they do is not related to any specific project, but they would research into new technology, new material use, or new design concepts.



Reception and conference room in the office of Steve Leung Designers Ltd

Selection of projects

There are some criteria which we apply in deciding what projects to undertake. The first is the client, and our main consideration is whether the client is willing to invest in quality work. The second is project size, and normally we would not do projects which are too small, although if the project is a new category for us and is challenging, we would also do it. We would also not focus only on prestigious projects, and are equally happy doing fast food stores or five-star hotels. The least we have done is retail shop since a great deal of time and effort is needed to research into the background of the industry or product of the shop, and this is not justified by the fee. The third is our workload, and if our workload is already very heavy then naturally we would select projects more strictly. The fourth is the project location, and I would sometimes take on a project because we have not done projects there before, like some restaurants we have recently done in Dubai, or a project in India. To sum up, our first criterion is always to do only quality projects, since otherwise it might affect our own reputation. We would then aim at diversification of project types, but I would try to keep at least 80% of projects to be profitable, with the remaining 20% for trying out new things or for enjoyment.

Basically I do not do home interiors, and my good friends all knew that I would not do such work for them, as I would not wish to lose my friends after the work! Actually, due to our operation, I cannot afford to do home interiors myself, but if I passed it onto my staff, then people would think it is not the same. So it is better not to do these projects at all.

I am not very keen on government projects, because I do not agree to the design and build process, which I think is too biased towards cost control. I think there is also a problem with the consultant selection process which is based too much on quantitative aspects. Of course there would be firms interested in participating in these projects, and I agree that it would be good to offer some public building projects to private consultants, such as museums or auditoria which are very interesting projects, but not normally available in the private sector.

Hong Kong and mainland clients

In my view, clients in Hong Kong tend to have a lot of expectations and requests, but their administrative structure is too repetitive, and often design proposals have to be presented through many levels, which can get misinterpreted and result in much abortive work. On the other hand, many mainland clients may not yet know what to request, and so in that sense the designer has more freedom to design, and if they met a good designer then they end up with a good project. It is rather like a parent and child relationship: if the parents are very strict, then the child cannot do too much wrong, but if they are less strict, then the child may either develop better due to the freedom, or turn into a bad kid. I think Hong Kong clients are rather like a strict parent, which may be too restricting for more creative designers. If these designers were truly good and they met some less restrictive mainland clients, then they would create some truly remarkable work, but if they were not really that good, then they might end up creating some disasters.

Differences between interior design and interior architecture

My understanding is that interior architecture is more focused on space, and may also be based on some architectural theories. On the other hand, interior design at its most basic level may just consist of the choice of carpet or wallpaper, which may be called interior decoration, and is something that we would not wish to be doing. As architects, we would want to apply in our projects what we have been trained to do as architects, including spatial arrangement and application of theories. We would look at the potential of different projects, and try to see how much architecture we can apply to elevate them to interior architecture.

Generally, when architects work on interior, they would focus more on the space first, and the thinking would also include some philosophical ideas, which is based on our architectural training that all designs should be derived from a theme or a concept. But then I do not think designers without architectural training cannot do that quality of work, like Tadao Ando who is a brilliant architect although he did not have formal design education.

The use of materials by architect would also tend to be simpler and more controlled, whereas detailing would be more delicate and less fanciful. There are a number of architects who are also practising as interior designers like myself, and my work is very different from that of, say, Mr Kenneth Ko, Mr William Lim, or Mr Gary Chang, so there are also differences in personal style.

Interior design and culture

In the last few years, developers, architects, designers and users have started to expect some elements of Chinese culture or regional culture to be included in projects, and some designers including myself have also started to include such elements in various projects, and are being recognised by the market. I think this has given us more room for development in the mainland, in terms of providing a platform for us to explore how Chinese culture can be reflected or expressed in our design.

When I re-structured my firm in 1997, I did my first show flat project which was Symphony Bay in Ma On Shan for Sun Hung Kei. At that time, many luxurious residential interiors were designed to emphasise glamour, and were almost exclusively based on a neo-classical style. I was fortunate to be given support by the client to attempt a modern minimalist style in my show flat designs, although this idea was quite daring and many people had expressed concern on whether it would work. Fortunately, the design turned out to be a success and other developers, designers and buyers have accepted this design style. Of course I did not invent this style but by doing these show flats I had managed to make it more recognised by the market.

Then, around 1998 or 99, I was involved in the design of the show flat for The Belcher's for the same developer, and that was one of the earliest show flats designed in a Chinese style. At that time, people generally felt that Chinese style was old-fashioned, but I decided to do the two show flats in Chinese style, with one in a



Apartment in Mission Hills

modern Chinese style which I still like very much. In 2000, I designed my own apartment in Mission Hills, and since it was my own place, I had complete freedom to try out new ideas. I adopted a traditional Chinese courtyard house concept, and it was also my first attempt in designing a complete furniture collection to go with the apartment. Later, I put some of these furniture pieces in my Shanghai office and many people asked if they could buy them. So I found some manufacturers to make these pieces for them, and eventually this led to the mass production of this collection by a Hong Kong manufacturer called Maxxa. This was how I began my furniture design business. At that time, the furniture market in China was dominated by copies, but Maxxa had the vision to produce some original designs, and so I decided to offer them the production rights. I would then no longer need to be concerned with manufacturing or quality control, and could focus entirely on design. We have cooperated for over ten years now and I have completed four or five collections with them. Another project is the Mandarin Palace development in Shanghai



Mandarin Palace, Shanghai

for which I was responsible for the interior design of one of the houses. More recently, I have also been involved in the interior design of a resort in Huang Shan for which the client had invited a professor from Tongji University to design the villas using an Anhui dwelling style. I think this kind of approach would continue to flourish in projects in the mainland.

Furniture and other designs

I think furniture is a very important part of interior architecture, but it is not always necessary to design your own furniture. You can specify furniture so long as you have a feeling for or knowledge about furniture. However it is very common for interior designers to design furniture since it is quite normal to reach a stage when a higher level of design satisfaction is needed, and a logical outlet is furniture design. Actually, furniture design is not easy, especially when it is for mass production. There is less restriction when designing a signature item since it is only a one-off piece, but for the mass market, there are many issues such as cost, durability, safety, and technical matters to consider, which in a way can be an interesting problem.

Actually, I am also extending into other design channels. I have already done some crossover design with a number of brands. We have designed a collection for Saga Furs, a Danish company who was looking at developing some household items using fur, and it was launched in Denmark and Shanghai, although it has not been mass produced due to some cost problem. We have also designed a fabric collection for Hunter Douglas, and ceramic tiles for Italian tile companies. If time permits I hope to be able to do more product design, which can provide some excitement alongside my interior practice.

Education and training

I think many architects would consider that they can do interior design, but I think not everyone is suitable. Interior design demands a lot of attention to detailing, and some architects are not familiar with this level of attention. Detailing is not only a technical problem, but also involves a lot of aesthetic thinking. Knowledge on materials and finishes is also important, and I think architectural schools should provide more training in these aspects. At a basic level I think the training for architectural and interior design can be common, but at a more advanced level some specialisation will be necessary.

As for myself, I was already very interested in architecture at an early age. Apart from drawing, I was also interested in making some furniture or doing some painting work for my home, which probably had a subconscious effect on my development as a designer. After starting to study architecture, I gradually had more opportunities to do some real design work for people and to practise what I had learnt, and these became opportunities for me to further develop my interest in interior work.

These days, I have been involved in some educational work for interior design, and I can see that there are many young people who are very interested and dedicated in the field. They have potential and passion, but right now Hong Kong does not have enough higher educational platform for advanced training in interior architecture or design. I think there are many potential design talents here in Hong Kong, if only the resources can match. Every generation is going to be more difficult than the last, and in order to succeed, the younger generation today will need to put in a lot of hard work, time commitment and dedication, especially when faced with competition from mainland designers.

Professionalism of interior design practice

In Hong Kong, the range of interior design practice is very wide, and therefore the standard also varies widely. I feel rather embarrassed to be saying this, but I think many of the interior and architectural firms in Hong Kong, including my own, are still far from a truly professional level. Compared to international practices, the level of professionalism of practices in Hong Kong are not really at a very high level, and I think the weakest aspects are their management and technical expertise. Take for example aluminium windows: the usual practice here is to get a contractor to do shop drawings, and the architect or designer might have very little understanding of the technology behind aluminium windows. May be this has something to do with education. I find that mainland architects or designers are stronger in this respect, and they are also more knowledgeable and well trained in building technology.

I think the government should develop more university courses in interior architecture, and perhaps in existing architectural schools there can be a choice to major in interior architecture. As the public have become more knowledgeable in interior design, one possibility to raise the professionalism of interior design practice would be to regulate the practice through legislation and the registration of practitioners, which is what I think the Interior Design Association is already doing. I think there will be difficulties in achieving this, but if it is supported by the government and recognised by most parties, and carried out through a fair and transparent process, it should be feasible.

It is necessary to ensure that any regulatory measures would not obliterate the more grass-root practices. Perhaps this could be done by project type so that only complex projects would require registered practitioners. It might not work if we insist that all interior design work would require registered practitioners.

Future challenges for interior design practice

Since 1997, I have noticed an increasing concern for interior design in our society as well as the mainland. Property buyers today are more knowledgeable on not only who the developer for a project is, but also who the architect is, or even who the interior designer is. I think the status of interior design has become much higher, and I believe this situation would continue to improve in the next 5 to 10 years. As people have higher expectation, greater pressure would be created for designers to do better. The economy will naturally go up and down, and when the economy is good people can afford a better quality of work, but even when it is bad, interior designers can still do good work, so long as the budget control is done well. In fact, designers have a greater responsibility when the economy is bad since they will need to do the same work within a limited budget.

As for competition, I think Hong Kong designers still has an advantage when entering the mainland market, since we have been advanced for longer and our experience is built up over many years. I also think Hong Kong designers have an international vision and connection which is still giving us the edge. But this edge will gradually diminish as mainland designers catch up with us, and so in the next 5 to 10 years Hong Kong designers need to continue to make progress, including not just creativity but also their service, productivity and practice. At a global level, designers will find themselves competing with more multi-national firms on top projects in the mainland, like our hotel projects which we are always competing with multi-national firms. In these cases, although we may not be as experienced, we still have a competitive edge in terms of location, language, or cost, and so we will need to be thinking of how to balance these factors to maintain competitiveness against other global players on a more levelled playing field.



HKIA Journal Editors (from L to R) Ivan Ip, Ellen Ngan and Franky Choi, with Mr Steve Leung

Images of Mr Steve Leung's office and projects courtesy of Steve Leung Designers Limited.

Interview conducted by Franky Choi, Ivan Ip and Ellen Ngan. Transcribed and edited by Ivan Ip.

Interview with Antony Chan, Interior Designer



Hotel LKF, Lan Kwai Fong, Hongkong

H = HKIA Journal Editors (Interviewers: Rex Chan, Franky Choi, Jenny Lai)

A = Antony Chan (interviewee)

H: There are currently a lot of programs on interior design. Do you think these help with publicity, and what do you think of all these diverse interior design programs in general?

A: Well awareness is really important, but the level is not important. Because Hong Kong is different from Western countries, where there are a lot of museums, a lot of architecture galleries and a lot of cultural activities, in one's upbringing there is a sense of beauty and a call for quality in life instilled in you. In Hong Kong however, I think the size of the dwelling or lack of space is not the main issue, what is important for the mass public is the appreciation for design. So I think these programs are actually good, of course if the quality of shown work is good, then the results are even better.

H: You have both architectural and interior design training. How do you see the relationship between interior design and architecture?

A: I think of architecture and interior as a union, as one whole thing. Back in the old days a lot of well-known interior designers were actually architects. But now we break everything down to smaller

parts, so there are architects who specialize in construction of buildings, especially in such an environment as Hong Kong. It's very complicated to handle. There are so many regulations, a lot of safety issues, a lot of rules you have to know. But actually I think to a certain extent, architects can also do what an interior designer does.

H: So what do you think is the most ideal way to combine the two, interior design and architecture?

A: Back in 1997 when I first returned to Hong Kong, integration between architects and interior designers was not that strong, and when it came to interior planning, people would just say 'help me out on that.' But nowadays it is different. An interior designer is in the team from the very, very beginning, so everyone has his or her own input. That is, everyone will be doing his or her own part. We are not saying that architects cannot oversee everything, but they just do not have the time to. Now that people are more specialized interior designers should focus on developing a special eye for the interior, for its quality. Interior designers can see the overall layout, the overall structure, how the implication will be achieved, and then look into the

smaller things. It's like a marriage, a point of affection between the architecture and the interior they should go on forever and never part. This is the reason why people design churches, right? I mean the structure loves the interior. The structure gives life to the interior quality, the interior space. Maybe there were some conflicts in between but they have never parted before. For some reason however they did part, but thankfully there is now a trend in Hong Kong to put the two back together.

H: So why did you choose to focus on interior design?

A: Well because of space restriction. I feel that in Hong Kong there isn't much room for 3-dimensional development. But now that the China market is slowly opening up, there is more space and room there and projects are becoming more 3-dimensional so to speak. In Hong Kong, and this is a slight exaggeration, you just have to work on the plan and then the façade, then you are done. There's nothing more you can do after that. It's a very complicated and long professional process to achieve the building of that design. I came back from Europe and at that time, and maybe I just wasn't used to such a practice, but I thought interior design somehow had more room for creativity.

H: So in the coming five to ten years, what do you think is the biggest challenge for this industry?

A: Challenge? Let me call it the biggest opportunity. Actually the platform has become very international, mainly because of China's 'coming of age.' Some time ago people didn't think there was talent in China, but now these people have their eyes set on China. And this is good. Not only for architecture it also applies to a lot of design. Like Chinese fashion or movies which are now popular overseas. Of course architecture is harder to transfer, but it has already started. Some Hong Kong architects are currently working in Dubai, for example. Interior design, on the other hand, would be even more easily transported to these places, so if the platform is well-maintained, we can have an extremely strong presence internationally.

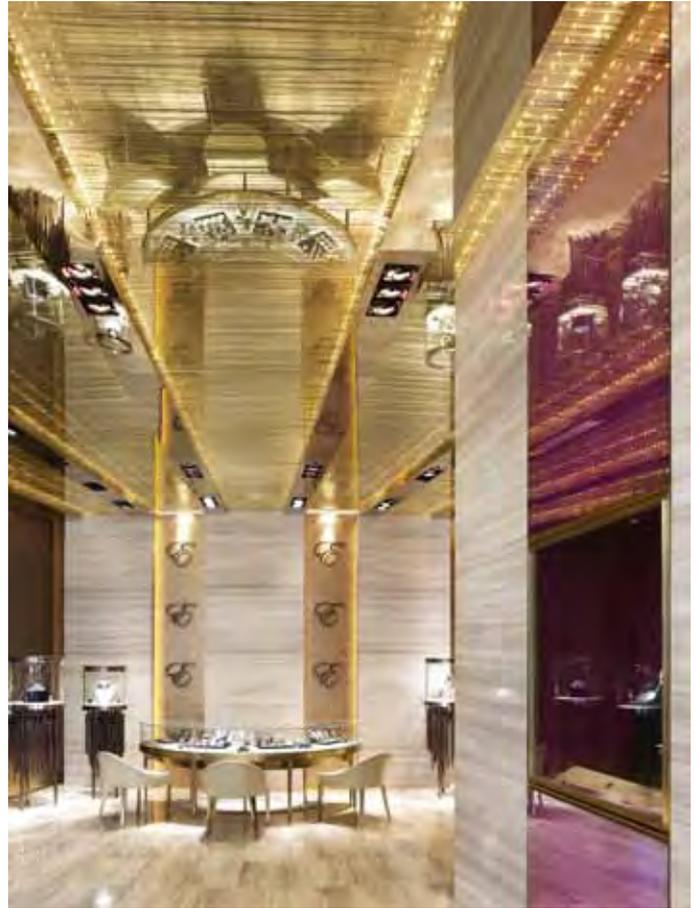
H: Can you explain your personal design philosophy?

A: I like to think of design as the 'Poetics of Space.' To the public, space is one thing - it's a space from the outside. What remains inside is the aura and as designers, as creators, we have our own techniques and processes for crafting that aura. I think a lot of people focus on other things nowadays rather than the feeling of a space. For example, if you walk into a church you feel its holiness and serenity and the feel of that the space can inspire you. And I think this is very important.

H: What about the design methods that you often use? Do you have a special approach that helps us to understand your creation?

A: Actually what Cream wants to do is create an aura, it is not that you see this wall and figure out that it is from Cream because they like white they have done it 30 times. We work on the fusion of art and living at the same time so the whole thing turns out to be cohesive. We like to work on things that are contemporary, because we do not need reference for what is contemporary, we can be our own reference. And I think, in contemporary design, you bring out your own interpretation, rather than putting yourself in a fixed scenario which dictates how your end product should look. That is, you do not have to make a bed this way, and the table that way. We do not let rules get in our way.

H: As architects we sometimes encounter clients who are like dictators, they want something and they have a very strong philosophy. Are



Emperor Jewellery 1881, Flagship Store HK (New Brand Creation)

there similar clients for interior design? Are you less likely to take this kind of job, or how would deal with these types of clients?

A: First of all, we won't reject any opportunities we find interesting. It's up to you to fight for your own freedom so I think each opportunity is something that you can control. I think if clients come to me they each have their own ideas and set of rules, or maybe a wish list that we have to follow. If that is what I get from them I will digest what they said and try to turn it into something else, that is to develop something else. I can't really tell what it will end up to be, I let the process dictate. None of my clients, and I am only speaking from my personal experience, know what they want exactly. They come and some of them are thoughtful enough to hand me a list of what they like and what I should do, but I understand they do not really know what they want so it is my job to interpret the requirements. The product will always have its own requirements, and based on my professionalism and my creativity I deliver a design that has all the functions the client requires, but in terms of design, I make sure that something new has been created.

H: How do you see copyright? Especially in mainland China where a design is copied in no time, what do you think about that?

A: I think copyright is very important, but then in social culture, in one social class, as they get to know more and more of things in life they



Miele Lab HK (Brand Reinforcement)

will have more respect for intellectual property. It is like back when intellectual property did not get much respect in Hong Kong. Now, as the society has become more sophisticated, people have started respecting this. China is a developing country and there are so many ways in which they are making improvements, so I think copyright will eventually become something that is much more respected.

H: So now, can you talk about some of your projects and describe them to us, what you wanted to achieve and the philosophy and the concept behind them? Like the project in the Lan Kwai Fong Hotel lobby.

A: When we were working on it, the whole set-up, we realized that our location was very special and we did not want to miss out on that, so the whole approach we took for the hotel was something very 'Hong Kong.' We wanted to establish the hotel as an 'urban sensibility', a place that exhibits Lan Kwai Fong's chemistry. This was quite important, because it is so noisy and there are so many people we really wanted to continue all of that energy into the building. But then a hotel lobby is also the place to welcome you home, if he or she is a tourist you really need to give them a sense of safety and security. So when you enter the lobby, you'll see that I used wood, but I really wanted to use it in a modern way. So, for example in the part that it is facing Lan Kwai Fong, I used timber wood louvers that we shaped to look like cocoons, so when people enter they see something modern, but not stark modern which sometimes makes you feel uncomfortable and futuristic. Instead it is rather grounded and you feel really comfortable. There are other devices that also do this. For example

on the floor we did some inlays, and aside from the decorative purpose, it also creates a sense of direction which leads the visitors to the lifts, or the outer parts of the building. So I think the whole process was quite interesting, and we responded to a lot of the requirements. I really love the vertical timber louvers, they do not only act as a shield but also stand as a barrier that keeps its transparency so you can choose to enjoy the vibrant Lan Kwai Fong, or if you want some quiet time you are shielded by those vertical timber louvers.

H: And what about the rooms?

A: As the hotel is a conversion from an office building, what you can do with the layout is limited. So the question was how to do the hotel art. Paintings make a place live. Here, we worked closely with a few renowned photographers from Hong Kong. From their work we hand-picked a series of photographs, and then in the 95 rooms according to their various shapes, there are different shapes rooms for each floor, we used different photographs in each room. We ended up having 95 distinct rooms, so it is great! When people step in to the room the different photos with the different layouts create a totally different chemistry. Here we can really convey the idea of 'now' because paintings are something from the past, but photography is a very contemporary medium. I think the aura that we created is great.

H: How do you usually provoke inspiration?

A: I like all things, I'll try my hand at anything. I really like operas, but I



Design Gallery, HK(Re-Branding)



Time Square, Dalian (Commercial Residential Complex)

like pop music as well. I also love multi-media art forms and of course traveling. Actually, I like to think of architecture and interior design as relying on life experiences, so if there is no experience you won't be able to create such things. For example, I never stay in the same hotel twice. I venture into new places and I always have to go to different places for business, I live in that different place every time so that I experience how locals do it. So I guess new experience is my inspiration.

H: You have worked and lived in France, the UK, and Hong Kong, can you tell us what you appreciate most about each of these places?

A: The UK is very raw, very original. It doesn't have many boundaries. For example, punk fashion could only have originated in the UK. As for the French, they are more into style. They are quite a graceful nation and they put a lot of emphasis on culture. And they really like to talk, to discuss and to explore. Actually in my opinion their culture is quite beautiful - they possess a kind of passion in everything they do. For example, in their Metro the French clap when a newly designed train arrives on the platform. Or if there is a new exhibition in the Louvre museum the whole family will go and have a look; they are really enthusiastic about things happening around them. As for Hong Kong, it's my home town. I don't really know what to say because it is easy to judge others, but since it's my home town it is my home so there is definitely a preference. I think Hong Kong is a really good place. And for us right now, Hong Kong is a blessed place. If we look at where Hong Kong is right now, the positioning, it is quite easy for us to get marginalized but this can also be a drive for self-motivation and can be transformed into a lot of power.



HKIA Journal Editors (from L to R) Franky Choi, Jenny Lai, Mr Anothny Chan (Interviewee), and Rex Chan.

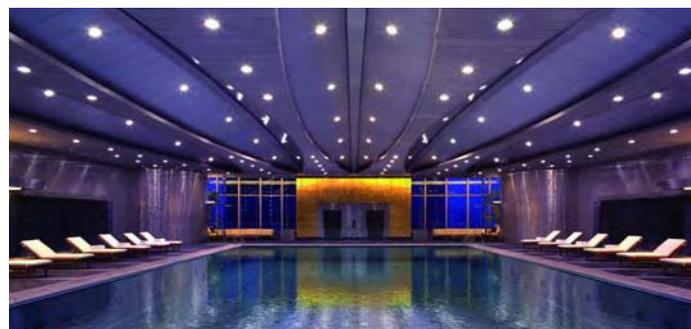
Interviewed by Rex Chan, Franky Choi and Jenny Lai
(Interview was conducted in Cantonese and translated into English)
Text Edited by Rex Chan

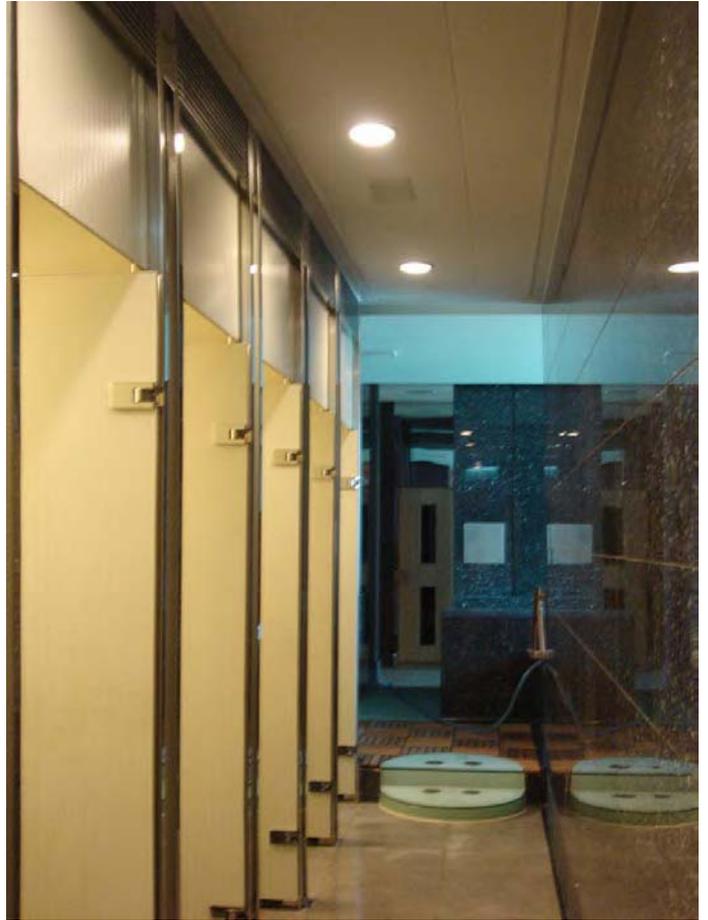


Clubhouse at The Arch

Lotus Architects Ltd

The idea of the swimming pool on the 59th floor of the residential building is exciting especially because the opportunity exists for a good sized 25M lap pool. What's more the structure of the building naturally propels the space towards the sky. I can imagine a fantastic view from the voluminous space and the wonderful sense of lapping into the free air, over and above Victoria Harbor and, beyond the Peak.





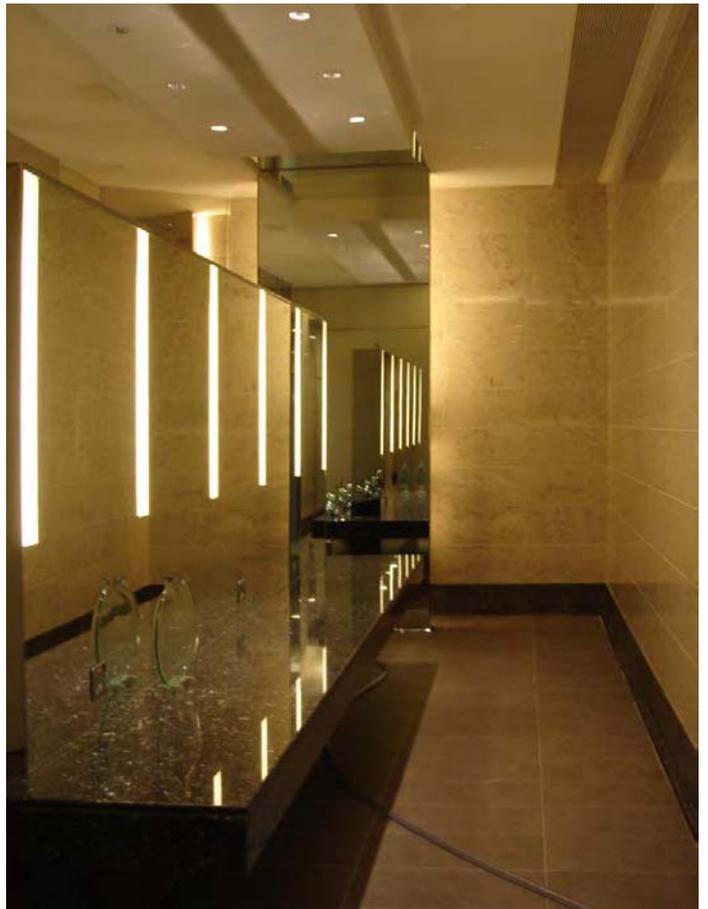
Holding onto that idea, the design team set about designing to achieve the sense of in-flight swimming :

- sculpting the space to accentuate the dynamic surge towards the sky;
- choosing finishing materials with "metallic feel" to radically depart from the resort or palatial style common to club or swimming pool interiors, aluminum, stainless steel mosaics coordinated with Laborador Blue granite and Otta stone
- Hovering above butter-colored stones are orange-coloured lit soffits which glows like the sunset sky.

The thematic design is complimented by acoustic considerations:

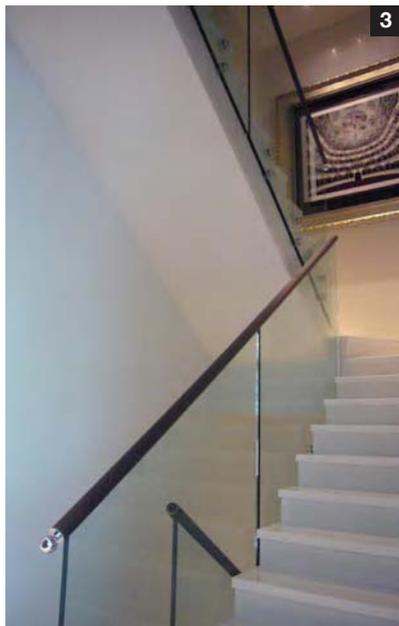
- trapezoidal flank wall enhanced by faceted wall surfaces on different planes and finished with materials of different tactile properties to vary the reverberation period on the large wall surfaces which all need to be hard and impervious to be hygienic.
- ceiling with slits like folded leaves to breakdown the parallel planes of the ceiling and the floor, again for reduced reverberating effect. Where ceilings need to be flat to accommodate mechanical installations, the surfaces are clad with acoustic panels coated with aluminum granules.

This is unmistakably a businesslike pool.



Showhouse - No. 2 at Severn Road

Lotus Architects Ltd



Concept

This 300 sq-m plus house is located in a secluded area on the Peak, tucked amongst lush greenery. The interior is designed in appreciation of these rare and precious assets of living in Hong Kong. The designed atmosphere is a sanctuary from the hustle and bustle of the city although the property has a seemingly arm's length view of the business districts both sides of the harbour.

Indeed, inhabitants of this interior are not going to be green hermits. They are city dwellers who enjoy its social life fully. The design brief called for an interior of luxurious splendor, rich with decorative details. It has to be fitting for habitation and

for showing off the "high living" in Hong Kong.

Reaching for splendor, design reference is made to classical architecture where geometric order and visual richness has played successfully on the psychology of superiority through history and all cultures. The interplay of classical symmetry and spatial/visual continuity enjoyed by contemporary design gives experiential interest and brings the spaces back to a consistent mode with the lifestyle of today. The interior design began with the reconfiguring of the spaces.

Use of Space

The living room (image 1), which was originally a rectangular space with a

staircase tucked in one corner, was given classical air with the symmetrical coffered ceiling complimented with symmetrical wall elevations at both ends. The staircase (image 4) was contained by a see through display wine cellar and semi transparent / reflective glass screen. This left an annex space for a bar area (image 2), complete with an LED screen, for video script, as counter top.

The staircase (image 3) was designed as a vertical art gallery with a variety of wall hung and sculptural artwork display at every landing. It opens up at the middle floor to the family room which acts as a hub for the family.

The top floor, with direct access to a relaxation roof garden, was completely

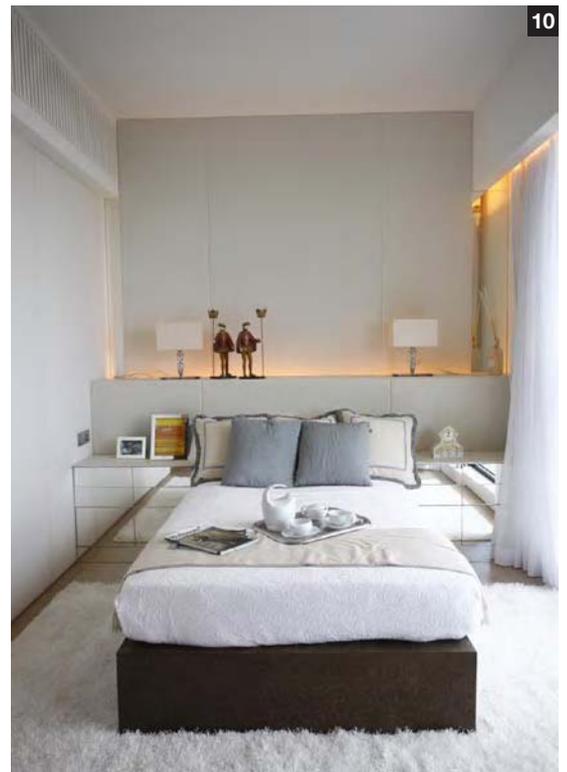


assigned to the master and lady of the house with an open plan. The stately bed area has a state of the art work annex which can be cut off by automated screens (image 5). The vanity mirror sized TV (image 5) can be turned around to serve both the work annex (image 9) OR the bedroom (image 8), when the vanity mirror is not in use. There is a His and a Her bathroom. The main bathroom (image 7) is literally part of the bedroom enjoying its spatial quality and views connecting directly

to a generous fashion house sized wardrobe room. On the side of the wardrobe room is an efficiency bathroom for the "rush hours".

Use of Colours, Materials / List of Major Materials

In a location where the colours of nature abound the chosen colours for the interior is deliberately subdued and monotonous with accents of strong colors permitted at strategic points only.



Lighting Scheme

In lieu of intense decorative detailing, materials with image reflectiveness or fractal light reflectance are used to produce dynamic effect rather than decorativeness. It is also intended to enhance the play of space between indoor and outdoor as well as one room and another by bringing the images and light quality of the one into the next. The layering of visual effect satisfied the client's desire for richness with very simple detailing.

Lake Dragon Residential Development Sales Office Guangzhou, China

Ronald Lu & Partners

The development is on a site area of 1.2 million square meters land of high end residential homes in a low density setting, next to the 36-hole Asian Game golf course in Guangzhou China. The architecture design of the houses adopts a modern and central courtyard approach.

The Client commissioned the same project architect (Ronald Lu & Partners) to custom design an independent Sales Office to showcase the project. The complex is design with three pavilions embracing a reflective pool in the center. In contrast to many other sales offices that are enclosed, the Lake Dragon Sales Office is intentionally created with an open and transparent glass expression capturing natural light, landscape and the tranquil and smoothing water feature. The almost transparent architecture turns itself into a glowing crystal over the reflection pool during the evening. The interior design emphasizes a spatial experience in synergy of close and open spaces that flows between the various functions. It is further garnished by a modern French sophistication: black and white marble flooring, giant leaf sculptures in champagne gold gilding, a solid gold color cylinder theatre, a bright, airy and high ceiling main hall featured with a 6x8 meter three dimensional crystal chandelier highlighting the architectural model of the residential development a grand Italian marble staircase leads to the up-stair VIP lounges. The integrated design approach of architecture, landscape and interior set a new standard for marketing and sales of residential developments in Southern China.



