

**The Hong Kong Institute of Architects  
Third Quarterly General Meeting  
24 September 2020**

**President's Report**

Dear Members,

Thank you for joining the third Quarterly General Meeting (QGM) of The Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA) in 2020. This QGM is particularly conspicuous as the results of the Council Election 2021-2022 will be announced soon right here. I would like to thank all candidates for joining the election.

Regardless the Council composition, the focus of the Council endeavours must be you HKIA Members, as well as the profession and the Hong Kong society at large. With the third-wave striking of COVID-19, the challenges encountered by our profession continues to be the imminent issue I and my Council peers striving hard to address. I will report to Members of our endeavours in this regard later.

Due to the social distancing measures against epidemic, for the third time in this year, we have to adopt special arrangement for our QGM. I do hope that by the time of the Annual General Meeting in December, which is also the last AGM I am going to chair, I and my Council Members can revert, at least partially, to the good old practice of mingling with you face-to-face over a cup of tea – regardless of what kind of “new normal” dialogue practice the local or even global societies have developed by then.

Talking about good old practice, we always invite heavyweights in our profession to share their wisdom with us at important gatherings such as our QGM. Tonight, we are honoured to have a heavyweight in not only architectural profession, but also in policy-making bureau, the Honourable WONG Kam-sing, GBS, JP, Secretary for the Environment, to give us a speech.

**Support for Members amidst Challenging Time**

In my President's Report for the previous two QGMs, I have presented what my Council has accomplished in liaising with various government bureaus, departments and public bodies. I am not going to run through the whole laundry list here again, but to update you what have been achieved over the past quarter, hopefully to bring out the way forward with silver lining.

***Anti-epidemic Fund Subsidy Scheme for Fresh Graduates and Assistant Professionals***

Following intensive liaison with the Development Bureau (DEVB), together with our peer institutes in surveying, town planning and landscape sectors, the scheme's one-month Stage 1 application was launched on 19 June. While applicant-companies which are HKIA Registered Practices (RP) automatically being classified as eligible, HKIA offered advice to DEVB on the eligibility of 21 cases which are not our RPs.

To facilitate our Members to apply for this scheme, as well as other funding schemes, we have publicised the information in various channels of communication with Members. We have also organised a briefing webinar, which was attended by over

40 Members or RP representatives. Our Secretariat has also helpfully responded to a number of enquiries from our Members and RPs in this regard. The efforts paid dividend. By close of Stage 1, 61 practices were considered as eligible for applying for subsidy places for Graduates, while 67 practices were qualified for applying subsidies for their Assistant Professionals (one practice may apply for both streams). The applied places for both streams exceeded the set quotas. In view of the overwhelming response, DEVB raised our sector's quotas by **68%** to a total of 565.

HKIA is now assisting DEVB in Stage 2 application to vet the eligibility for receiving subsidy of the individual applicant-employees. We do hope the scheme can help lessen the hardship of our Members a bit, and can assist the young talents in our profession to retain their jobs and training.

### ***Measures to Facilitate Submissions during COVID-19 Outbreak***

Along with the fluctuating outbreak situations, various Government departments have adopted home office mode of different scale in different times, making it a headache for our Members to timely handling our statutory submissions. We have written to DEVB to propose measures for facilitating submission during the outbreak. Some departments do adopt certain views of ours, and have their efficiency and communications with stakeholders enhanced. Yet, the performances of departments varied. Delay in processing still existed in some cases – with the extreme of having procrastinated for nearly a year. HKIA representatives have time and again liaised with the departments concerned for addressing Members' problems. We will continue to closely monitor the situation and serve as a bridge between Members and departments for finding timely resolution for any problems.

Hopefully, some effective measures adopted during such special period may bring benefits. Some measures, especially those taking advantage of online technologies, may help streamline the submission process in future for the benefit of all stakeholders.

### ***Design Competitions and Exhibitions***

We have been grabbing every possible chance of working on or promoting build design competitions of varied scales, as well as soliciting opportunities for showcasing Members' talents. While many events and initiatives in the upper half of the year were being held back by the epidemic, we still manage to schedule the launch of quite a few in the latter half of this year, such as:-

- Design Competition for Hong Kong Observatory Tide Gauge Station at Tai Po Kau;
- HKIA Idea Design Competition 2020 – Entrance Gateway Design for Victoria Park Lunar New Year Fair 2021;
- Architectural Design Idea Competition for SDG ECO Village Transitional Housing Project co-organised by HKIA and the Professional Green Building Council (PGBC); and
- DesignInspire 2020, which HKIA co-organises with Trade Development Council to showcase the exhibits of around HKIA Members. Three of them would also be invited to speak at the "DesignInspire InnoTalk".

There are some more initiatives undergoing liaison, which I hope we can announce the good news to Members very soon.

We have also made use of various channels to update Members the various architectural design competitions and tender information of Macau, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and other Greater Bay Area cities.

### **Support for the Community**

While offering support to our Members and the industry in facing the pandemic, HKIA also takes it as our social responsibility in making use of our expertise to help the public fight against COVID-19 and sustain healthy built environment. To play a part in narrowing the digital chasm, the Institute has been collecting used computers from our Members, and cash donations for software license purchase and internet access, so as to support the needy students for their home learning during the epidemic. The 60 members strong COVID-19 Volunteer Group also plans to outreach to more under-privileged families for offering care and support.

In July, the Volunteer Group has launched the HKIA Healthy Building Quiz Mobile App, which is designed to enhance public awareness of the qualities of healthy building and the importance of continuous maintenance.

The Healthy Building Healthy City webinar series goes on over the past quarter. Initiated by HKIA, two of the webinars were jointly organised with our partnering institutes in surveying, town planning and landscape. By leading the institutional collaboration, we hope to take reference of COVID-19 to work together on healthy building education, guidelines, or even advocacy for public policy improvement for the community in the long run.

### **Communication with Policy-makers and Professional Communities**

#### ***Fee Diving Control Mechanism***

HKIA has been raising the issue of fee diving with the Government, together with other professional institutions, for many years, as it has given rise to unhealthy competition among architectural practices affecting the delivery of quality services.

I am glad to report that DEVB is exploring on a mechanism to control fee diving for adopting in AACSB (Architectural and Associated Consultants Selection Board) consultancies for public-funded projects. HKIA has written to express our concerns and suggestions, and will closely monitoring the progress.

#### ***Modular Integrated Construction (MiC)***

The Institute has written to DEVB in response to its issuance of the technical circular dated 31 March 2020 that stipulated adopting MiC for new buildings for most of the Capital Works with immediate effect. We pointed out our concern of lacking stakeholders' consultation prior to the launch of the circular, brought up the many aspects needed consideration for adopting MiC, and raised our suggestions for addressing the issues.

#### ***Suggestions regarding Harbourfront Projects***

We have submitted to DEVB the Institute's views and comments on the proposed two-envelope tendering arrangement for disposal of Site 3 of the New Central Harbourfront, as well as on Harbourfront Enhancement Projects, in June and August respectively.

## **Promoting Architectural Excellence**

### ***HKIA Gold Medal 2020***

We launched this most prestige honour this year for recognising individuals with consistent, profound and demonstrated contribution to architecture in Hong Kong. Besides paying tribute to the awardees, we also hope that they would become our profession's ambassadors in promoting architectural excellence to the general public.

Nomination period has been closed on 31 July and the adjudication process is undergoing. We hope to be able to report to you the result soon.

### ***HKIA Annual Awards 2019/20***

Other than the awards for 5 building types in and outside Hong Kong, this year, under the 8-category Special Architectural Award is a newly added category of "Social Innovation". By this new category, we expect to see our fellow members applying innovative and caring mind to upgrade the environment to meet the diverse social needs of different groups of people and create positive social impact.

By the close of nomination on 19 June, we have received a total of 71 nominations. Adjudication process was conducted throughout the past two months. By end of November, we will announce to the public the excellent ideas and projects that being recognised with the HKIA Annual Awards.

### ***The 17th Venice Biennale International Architecture Exhibition – Hong Kong Exhibition (VB 2021)***

With the deferral of the Venice exhibition to May to November 2021, a series of events would be held in Hong Kong from August 2020 to the first quarter of 2021 as replacement of the original Hong Kong Response Exhibition. The events include the Hong Kong Prexhibition, 6 webinars, and virtual exhibition. Stay tuned with HKIA publicity so that you would not miss the chance of witnessing the brilliant design ideas of Hong Kong talents.

### ***HKIA Cross-Strait Architectural Design Symposium and Awards (CADSA) 2019***

Braving the epidemic, the CADSA Core Exhibition was held from 23 June to 7 July 2020 at ifc Hong Kong. The roving exhibition in Shenzhen has been re-scheduled for December this year, and we have also tentatively scheduled the exhibition in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for the 4th quarter of 2020.

### ***HKIA Architecture Exhibition in Los Angeles – Response Exhibition***

Due to the third wave of COVID-19 in Hong Kong, the two-week response exhibition is tentatively postponed to mid-October this year.

## **Connection with Overseas**

### ***Transitional Arrangement for recognising UK Architectural Educational Qualifications***

Starting 1 February this year, the Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA) revised its list of architectural educational qualifications recommended for recognition. The programmes of the United Kingdom (UK) have been removed from the list. As HKIA currently has no mutual recognition arrangement for academic credentials with the UK, HKIA and ARB have decided on special transitional arrangements regarding

applying for HKIA/ARB Professional Assessment. In short, students who commence their UK architectural programmes in 2021/22 or before would not be affected upon their graduation. Yet, for students who start UK architectural studies in 2022/23 or after, upon graduation, they will be required to apply for the HKIA Academic Qualifying Assessment (AQA) to assess their eligibility for sitting our Professional Assessment.

The change taken by CAA is out of HKIA's control. Nevertheless, we have tried our best to provide sufficient grace period for students concerned, to allay worries among students studying in the UK, and to keep those who desire to enroll for UK studies well informed as early as possible. Yet, on the other hand, we need to ensure safeguarding the standard for our Professional Assessment, as well as our obligation under the Canberra Accord. Besides posting the information onto our website and online channels, we have taken the initiative to issue press release and stage public webinar for addressing concerns of the public in July. We have also proactively disseminated the information to all secondary and international schools, as well as educational bodies in Hong Kong. We will continue to explore opportunities of entering into mutual recognition for academic credentials with UK counterparts.

### ***Canberra Accord***

Talking about the Canberra Accord, as its full signatory, HKIA will have to fulfil our duty of hosting its 2021 General Meeting in Hong Kong. We have proposed to the Canberra Accord Interim Meeting held online last week (16 and 18 September) our intention to stage the event in June 2021. The details would have to be worked out by the forthcoming term of Council, and I am sure Members would be kept posted of the progress.

### ***Architects Regional Council of Asia (ARCASIA), Union of International Architects (UIA), Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA)***

Due to the global outbreak of COVID-19, various meetings, seminars, workshops, exhibitions, awards etc of our overseas partnering organisations have to either postponed or go online. Yet, we would not let physical barrier deter us from strengthening our network and making contribution in the global arena. The Institute not only help promote the many overseas online educational events to our Members, our representatives also served as speakers and panellists in a number of webinars and online forums. For example, the ARCASIA Committee on Young Architects Web Forum, the ARCASIA Emergency Architects / Social Responsibility Workshop, the UIA Heritage and Cultural Identity Work Programme Webinar, the UIA Rio Expo Virtual, to name just a few. I would invite you to read the details in the Honorary Secretary Report.

### **Connection with Mainland**

#### ***Practising in the Mainland and Greater Bay Area***

Together with BMA Chair Dickie LAU and ARB Chairman Benny CHAN, I have attended the Government's briefing on 15 July on the new measures for facilitating architectural and engineering sectors to start business and practise in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Subsequently, BMA has been disseminating such updated information, and various practicing news in the Mainland to our Members. In the well-attended BMA seminar held last week (17 September), besides elaborating on the new measures, veteran Members also shared their practical experience in registering, practising and providing professional services in the Mainland.

### ***Shenzhen Registered Architects Association (SZRAA) CPD Courses***

HKIA continued to collaborate with our Mainland counterparts to provide online CPD courses for our Members. Nine HKIA Members have registered for the latest series of courses ran in August and September 2020.

### ***HKIA Belt and Road Forum***

Due to the prevailing COVID-19 threat, we have to further postpone the forum, originally scheduled for October this year, in the hope of accommodating the physical attendance of more participants from the Mainland and other Belt and Road nations. We plan to hold the forum in the first or second quarter in 2021, and will keep Members posted.

### **Sincere Thanks**

As of today, although my term of presidency still has one quarter remained, I dare say for sure that it is a challenging term — facing the unprecedented turbulence of social movement and coronavirus outbreak that I desperately hope that no other presidents would need to face in future. Having said that, I feel deeply honoured to be the President of a long-history Institute composed of professionals dedicated to architectural excellence and well-being of the community; and I deeply treasure the opportunity of giving back to the profession by braving the storm shoulder to shoulder with my peer fellows. I must thank all my Council peers for their support over these challenging times. Without their innovative ideas and concerted support, this Council would not be able to realise our pledges of serving our Members, promoting architectural excellence, and fulfilling our social responsibility amidst unprecedented events.

My heartfelt gratitude also goes to all our Members, who offer staunch support to HKIA regardless in ups and downs. Last but not the least, my sincere thanks to the diligent members of the Secretariat, who always manage to work behind the scene to get our jobs done well.

I have no crystal ball to look into. Yet, I have confidence that taking root of our solidarity, rationality and professionalism, the architectural profession will have a brighter future ahead.

Yours sincerely,

Felix Li, *CHKIA, Registered Architect*  
President

24 September 2020