

Spaces.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

— where there’s a story
occupying every *space* in Hong Kong

Welcome
to our magazine

We aim to explore moments of past and present experiences within the diverse and ever so changing pockets of this city. Forever transient, Hong Kong constantly offers stories of innovation, passion, and emotion for those who trek through these streets, which makes this worth sharing even more.

We start in our beautiful HKU campus, and then move forward towards the little local spaces that are chic and Instagrammable. We also take a quick turn in time to revisit one of the city’s first supermarkets in the 70s. There will also be moments of past memories, stories of green projects in the city, to even an AI envisionment of future Hong Kong. We hope that you can find a little bit of “you” in each of these stories.

As an editor, it has been such an inspiring journey to see each writer’s exploration of this dynamic city in which we call “home.” I have definitely become more aware of these unknown spaces after hearing about its history and sentiment. I am so proud of the SPACES team for pushing themselves and putting their best work forward for you to read. I hope that you will enjoy it as well!

Hailey Yip
Editor in Chief



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HKU HIDEOUTS

Find Yourself Somewhere Quiet

By Simeng XU

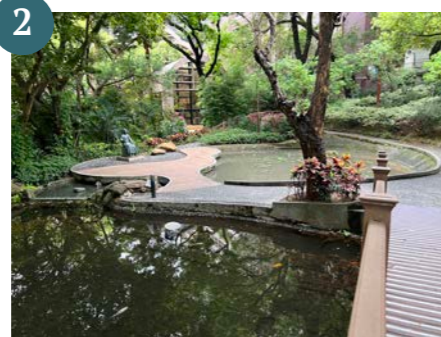
Between Meng Wah Complex and Eliot Hall

“There are a few benches and picnic tables. Sometimes I will come here to study alone, to look over notes from my lectures or different materials.”

—Antony, a graduate student in the Faculty of Engineering.



1



The Lily Pond, next to the Knowles Building

“I often wander beside the pond. When I am stressed and want to run away from the office, I come here to relax and to give my eyes a break from staring at a computer. It is comfortable, pretty and the air feels clean.”

—Li Rong, a PhD student in the Faculty of Architecture.

2

The third floor of the Jockey Club Tower

“You can picnic here, or just sit and chat. I used to sit here and eat lunch with my classmates before lessons. When I go back now it reminds me of those times we spent together.”

—Annabel, a part-time research assistant in the Department of Psychology, used to be a bachelor and master student at HKU.



3



Chi Wah Garden

“I come here to eat or listen to music. There's lots of space and fresh air. It makes me comfortable.”

—Brandon, a freshman in the Faculty of Business and Economics

4

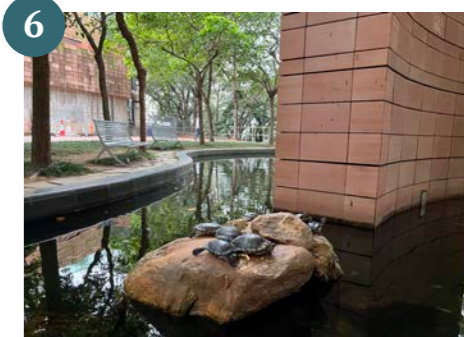
The Centennial Garden

“I often walk here after dinner, or when I need to focus on something. The trees, the scenery and the quiet help me feel calm.”

—Wei Yuantang, a 2nd year PhD Student in the Department of Physics



5



The Turtle Pond, between the Jockey Club Tower and Run Run Shaw Tower

“It's a fun place. You can not only sit on the bench and enjoy the calm, but also watch the turtles. They are cute and you can feel your breathing become as slow as them, especially when you watch them swim in the pond.”

—Xu Simeng, a graduate student in JMISC

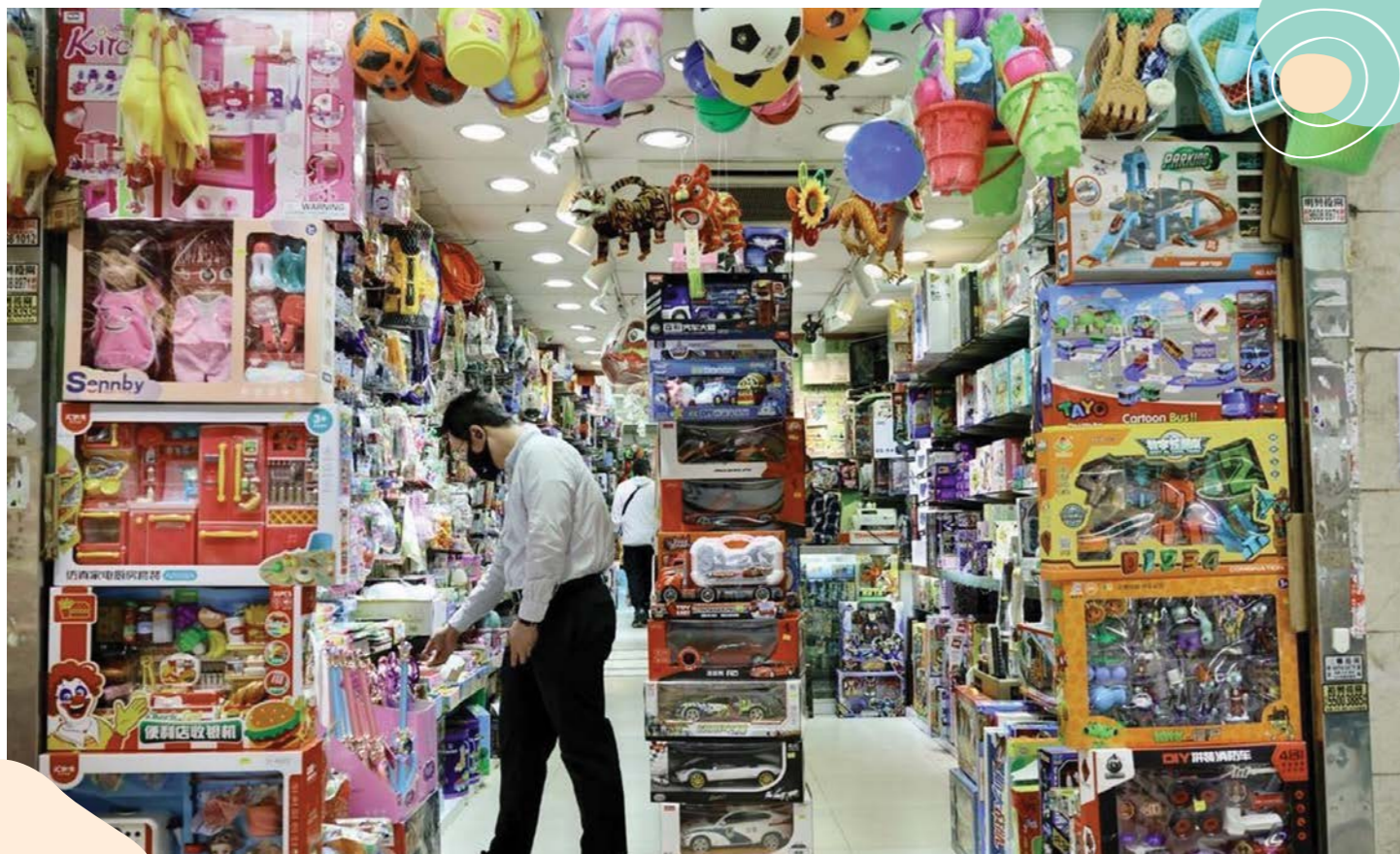
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Students and staff inevitably encounter great pressure in their time at HKU. In these moments, we long for a hidden corner or a private bench where we can sit back, forget about our deadlines, and presentations, and relax for a while. But are there such spaces on campus? Where does our HKU community go to unwind?

HONG KONG'S TOY STORY

Tai Yuen Street in Wan Chai is a paradise for toy seekers and those who want to relive their childhood memories

By Kaiying LYU



A toy shop on Tai Yuen Street.

How Kam-yu, 36, wanders along narrow Tai Yuen Street with her 8-year-old daughter, Hailey. Colourful vendors selling cheap household items and clothes occupy the space on this walkway, but it is the brightly lit shop windows on both pavements that have captured Hailey's attention.

The little girl jumps up and down, excited to handle the different toys that line the shelves of store after store. Finally, her eyes fix on a small video game console. "Mummmm, I want this!"

"This is the street that I loved the most when I was a kid. It's like a paradise for young children," says Chow. "My mum also used to buy me toys here. Time flies. Now I am buying toys for my own kids."

In the post-war era of the 1950s to 1970s, Hong Kong became a major hub for manufacturing plastic goods and toys, with many factories producing a wide range of products such as dolls, action figures, puzzles, and board games. The city's strategic location and favorable business

environment made it an attractive destination for foreign investors looking to take advantage of low labor costs and high production efficiency.

As a result, Hong Kong became a major exporter of plastic toys to markets all over the world, with many well-known brands producing their products there. The plastic toy industry played a significant role in the city's economic growth during this period, and it helped establish Hong Kong as a global center for manufacturing and trade.

Tai Yuen Street in Wan Chai, became known for its toys during the 1990s, when a few stores like Yat Sing Toys and Hung Hing Toys first opened. As more and more toy shops opened, it soon became known as "Toy Street", attracting customers with its great variety of playthings, including retro toys from the 1990s, Japanese Gashapon, Lego, model cars and action figures, and etc.

More recently, these stores, like other services in Hong Kong, have taken a strong hit by pandemic restrictions. They are still recovering.

John Fung, the owner of Yat Sing Toys, says his shop barely survived during the pandemic. He said, "All kids stayed at home. We had only five visitors at most per day. People would buy toys online during Covid, but that trend had started even before the pandemic."



John Fung, owner of Yat Sing Toys.

According to data from Statista, offline toy sales dropped nearly 21% between 2019 and 2023. To cope with this changing consumer behaviour, Fung opened a Yat Sing Toys online store, but sales remain low.

"I usually buy one set of Lego a month from the toy street. Lego from here is usually 20% cheaper than other stores," said a young man with a large box of Lego tucked under his arm in a plastic bag.

For some, Tai Yuen Street is a great place to find a bargain, but for others it is a trip down memory lane.

"Most of our customers are parents and kids, but sometimes there are customers who just want to relive their childhood memories," said Li Hongbin, a toy shop owner. "Some of the retro-style toys can easily take our customers back to their childhood."

"Here I can still find some of the toys of my era and the memories just flood back," said Chow. "Though modern toys are much more advanced, I still feel a sense of connection when looking at those 'boring but classic' toys."

As Chow and Hailey exited the toy store, the little girl tore open the packaging, revealing a game console with Pikachu on its back. The mother watched with joy as her daughter held it close to her chest, her eyes lighting up with delight. She then leaned in to give her daughter a warm embrace, feeling grateful for this special moment they shared together.



A great variety of toys in the window display at Hung Hing Toys.



Li Hongbin, the owner of Gifts and Toys House, has been running this store for seven years.



Chow's favourite toy when she was a child.

INVISIBLE HEROES

The Story of a Nepalese Cleaner

By Agnes WANG

At any moment in Hong Kong, there is an army of cleaners marching along the streets of the busy city. There are those who clean the pavements with water, leaving a trail of glistening water behind them. There are the elderly women who go around stacking cardboard boxes onto a trolley, to be taken away to the cardboard recycling shops. The cleaners with carts, collecting rubbish bags and sweeping pavements. Despite the diversity of their roles, they all share a common goal of keeping the city clean and tidy... Sadly, the work of such individuals like Rabi, often goes unnoticed.

A 70-year-old Nepalese man, Rabi, who is unable to provide his full name due to privacy issues, moved to Hong Kong three years ago with the help of his daughter and son-in-law. In Nepal, he worked as a carpenter, but at the age of 67 decided to move to Hong Kong to earn more money. When asked about the difference between working in the two places, he laughs and says that only very poor people or "inferior" individuals, as he puts it, would do cleaning work in Nepal.

"Chinese people are so nice," he says. "They treat us Nepalese like equals. They don't ignore us just because we're cleaners."

Since obtaining his Hong Kong ID card, Rabi has worked for three different companies as a cleaner and is now earning HK\$18,135 per month.

By Agnes WANG

Each night, people throw their rubbish next to collection points, these are often then scavenged for valuables and edible food, leaving the contents scattered everywhere. Rabi starts work the next morning at 5:30 am, cleaning up litter left by merchants and local residents.

The street Rabi is assigned to is not long, but his daily routine is a challenge. At 70 years old, he walks back and forth along the road with determination. He covers nearly 3 kilometers a day as he works tirelessly to keep the street clean. The job requires a great deal of physical effort and patience, especially for an elderly person.



Rabi is collecting rubbish from different booths.

"It is tough for me to stoop down so many times a day, especially in the morning when the street is dirtiest. My back almost breaks" says Rabi.

He gets a three-and-a-half-hour break in the middle of the day and then continues working until 4:30 pm. Sometimes, when the nearby wet market is particularly dirty, he works until 5:30pm.

"My friends only take one day off every month. Sometimes, they ask the boss whether they can keep working to earn extra money, but he says 'at least one day off for resting'," says Rabi. "My boss is a really good guy."



8 a.m. in the morning, Rabi starts working in the Yau Ma Tei Wet Market with his trolley.

When it comes to annual leave, most of Rabi's colleagues will choose to keep working in order to send more money back to their family in Nepal.

Despite being 70 years old, Rabi is determined not to drop out and lose his job. He plans to stay in Hong Kong until he finishes his work and sends enough money back to his family before returning home. He hasn't been back for three years.

Among his colleagues, only five out of 50 are Chinese. The rest are Nepalese, so communication isn't a problem. Showing how he communicates with his Chinese colleagues, he holds a broom and waves it to signal which part of the street has been cleaned.

Rabi doesn't have much time for entertainment during the day. Although he and his workmates are allowed to chat, he struggles to recall any memorable experiences or stories, but shares that he enjoys taking walks and drinking tea with his friends. The happiest times, he says, are when they get together to barbecue.

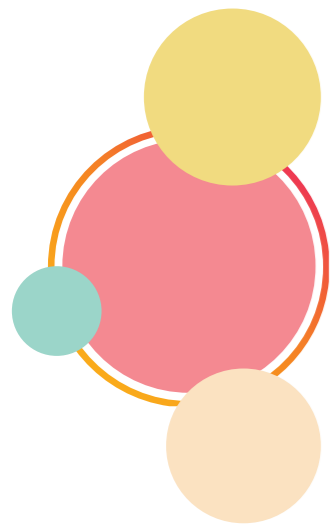


Rabi is sitting in one store near his working place.

Rabi explains that he currently lives in a shared room with a colleague, but his rent is still too expensive, at HK\$4000 per month. Together with his travel, food, and other expenses, he needs to spend between HK\$8000 to \$9000 per month just for basic living. His daughter, who also lives in Hong Kong, pays his rent and provides some support so that Rabi can send more money back to Nepal, to support his sons and grandchildren.

"My grandchildren need money for their education. So I really hope that the government could provide public housing for us cleaners," he says. "I hope we can be noticed by the public and the government, then we can be provided with better protection and profits."

After our conversation ends, he walks down the street and vanishes from view, becoming invisible once again.

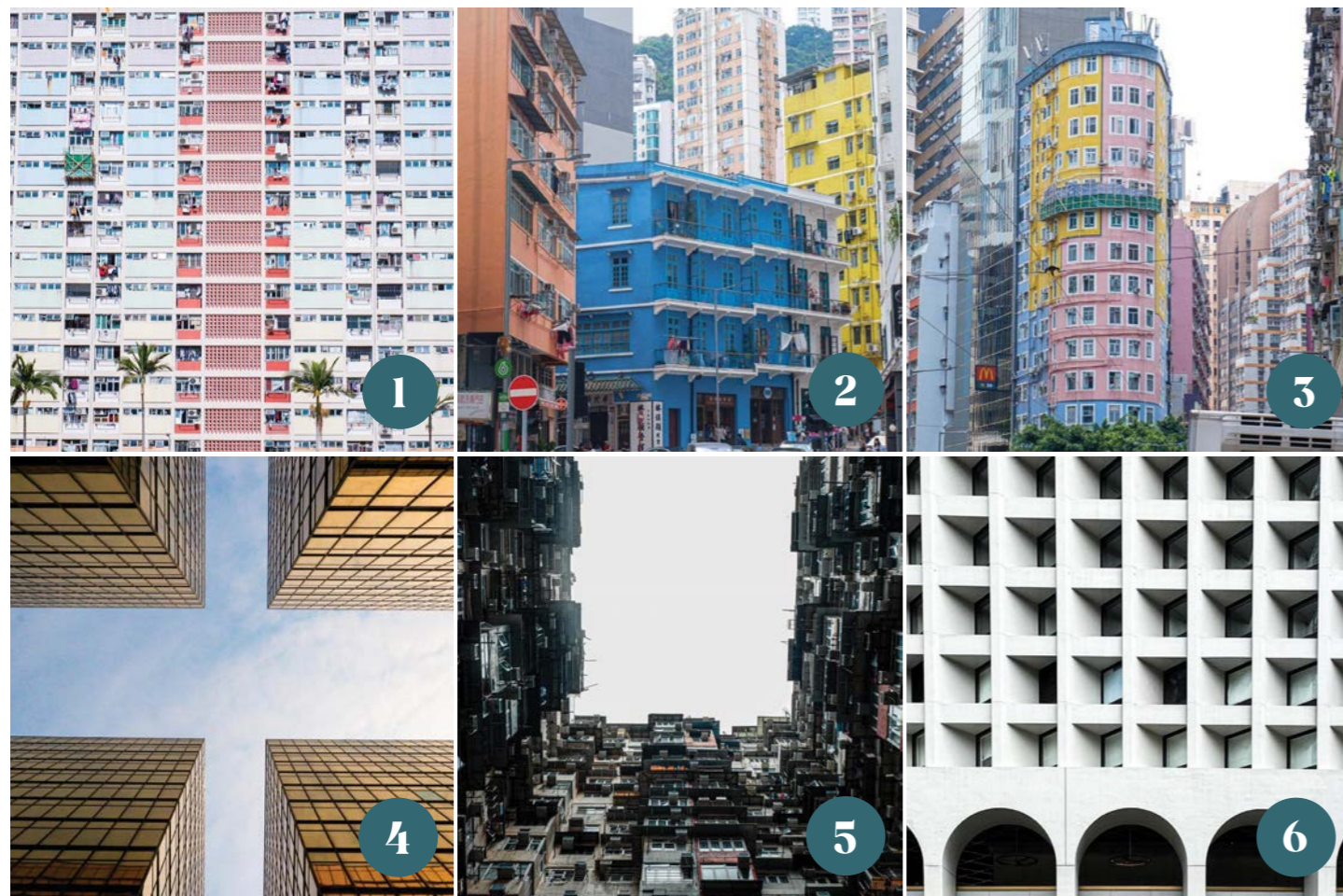


INSTAGRAMMABLE BUILDINGS

By Victoria LI

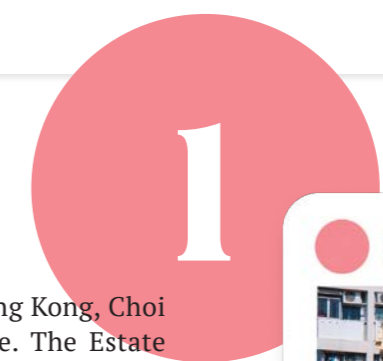
With their bold colours, geometric designs and a blend of old and new, Hong Kong architecture is an Instagrammers dream. We've explored some of Hong Kong's most iconic structures, and some maybe lesser known, to give you the lowdown on where to go, whether or not they're worth the visit and a brief history for you to pass off as your own work in your captions.

POSTS REELS TAGGED



- 1** Choi Hung Estate
- 2** Blue House
- 3** Chung Hui Mansion
- 4** China Hong Kong City
- 5** Monster Building (Yik Cheong Building)
- 6** The Murray

Choi Hung Estate



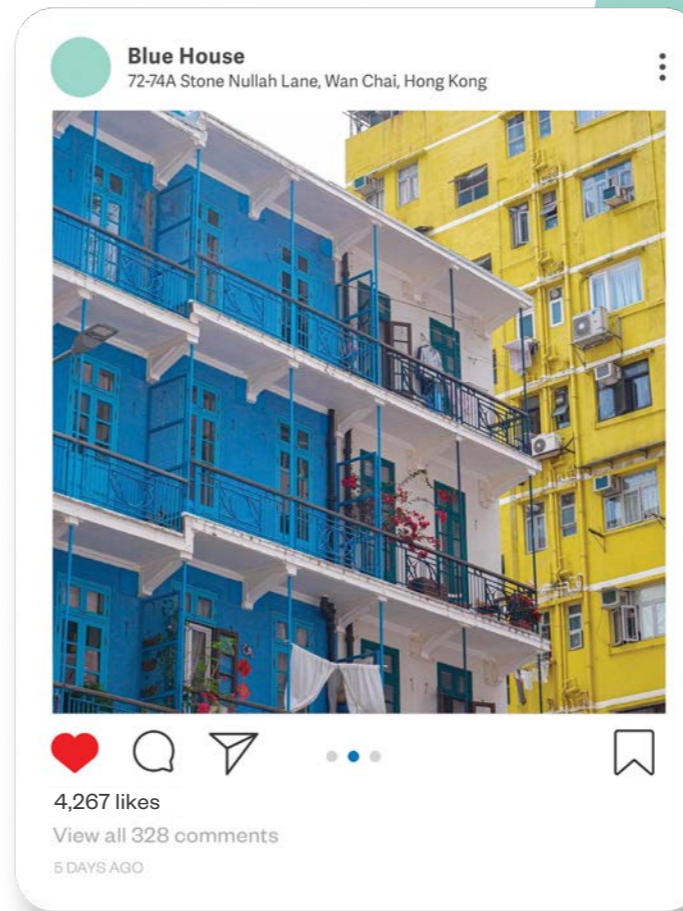
As the largest public housing estate in Hong Kong, Choi Hung accommodates nearly 43,000 people. The Estate is made up of 11 residential blocks, five schools, and a variety of stores catering to residents' every need. The colourful exterior makes Choi Hung Estate popular on social media.

Notes:

- 1) A car park roof is below the basketball playground for the estate residents. Be careful not to disturb them when you exit the MTR, basketball courty are located above the carpark.
- 2) Choi Hung Estate has been built for over 60 years, and the colours on the building are indeed pale and light. You would need heavy photo editing such as adding saturation to photos to make them become colourful and attractive.

Image style: rainbow, modern
Accessibility: public space

The basketball playground is surrounded by three colorful buildings. ▶



Blue House

The Blue House is the original site of Hong Kong's first hospital "Wah To Hospital" built in the 1870s. Today, it has been transformed into a 4-storey balcony-style cultural and historical centre. Its bright blue colour attracts a number of tourists, making it a landmark of Wan Chai.

As part of the government's HK\$100 million plan to preserve Chinese-style buildings, Blue House was renovated and reopened in 2016.

Notes:

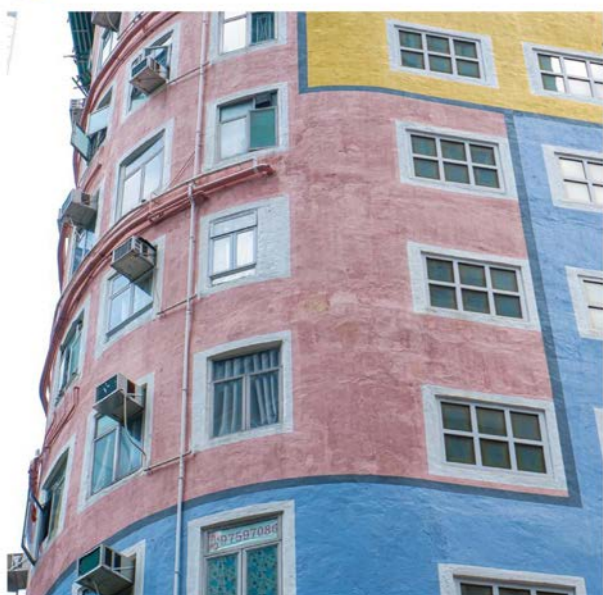
There are a few restaurants and cafes around the blue house, but there aren't other shopping options.

Image style: monochrome, colonial
Accessibility: public space

◀ *There are still residents living in the Blue House, each with their own picture perfect balcony.*

3 Chung Wui Mansion

Chung Wui Mansion
106 Wan Chai Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong



3,495 likes
View all 239 comments
5 DAYS AGO

Chung Wui Mansion is a colourful composite building, a typical architectural style in Hong Kong that contains both residential areas and workplaces, located in the middle of the intersection between Johnston Road and Wan Chai Road. If you would like to take a full picture of it, it is recommended to take a tramcar to North Point/Causeway Bay at Swatow Street station and sit in the front. Chung Wui Mansion is quite close to the Blue House, so you could arrange the trip for these two spots on the same day.

Note:

Same as Choi Hung Estate, the building is not as colourful as you see in the picture—you would need further photo editing to make it saturated. I would recommend you visiting on a sunny day to get a brighter picture.

Image style: multicolor

Accessibility: public space

◀ *The body of the building is pastel flair, with three colours irregularly arranged on it. It is said that the colour was not painted until the late 1970s.*

4 China Hong Kong City

Located in the heart of Tsim Sha Tsui, China Hong Kong City is famous for its shopping and ferries to Macau and Mainland China. However, it also has a remarkable spot for taking stylish pictures with its golden buildings.

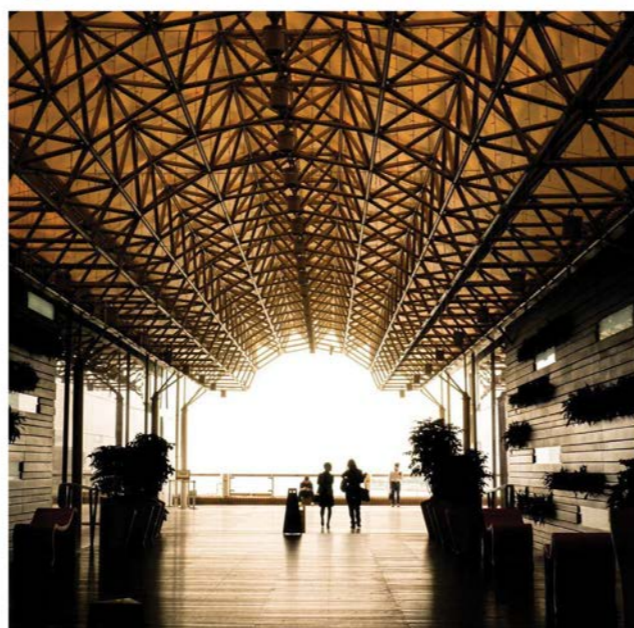
Note: I took the pictures on the roof garden of the China Hong Kong City. I would suggest you to go on a sunny day, so that the mirror-like buildings will reflect the sunshine, which will make the image more stunning.

Image style: modern, metallic

Accessibility: commercial space

◀ *There is a corridor between the buildings, where people are able to enjoy the sea view.*

China Hong Kong City
33 Canton Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong



2,394 likes
View all 198 comments
5 DAYS AGO

5 Monster Building (Yik Cheong Building)

Monster Building (Yik Cheong Building)
1046 King's Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong



3,587 likes
View all 268 comments
5 DAYS AGO

One of the most representative buildings in Hong Kong the 'Monster Building' is known for its incredible density. The tightly packed neighbourhood in Quarry Bay also forms a unique and iconic city view.

Note:

- 1) Since the buildings are for residential purposes, the community has banned public shooting. It is possible to be expelled from the neighbourhood. Please keep quiet while taking photos and do not stay there for too long
- 2) The environment is quite dark there, which means that you need to increase the "shadow" and lower "highlight" indexes in your photo editing software.

Image style: old Hong Kong, Steam punk, astounding density

Accessibility: private space

◀ *Many photographers also take pictures from outside the building on Yau Man Street, where you are able to see traditional Hong Kong shop signs.*

The Murray
22 Cotton Tree Dr, Central, Hong Kong



2,198 likes
View all 167 comments
5 DAYS AGO

6 The Murray

The Murray was a major government office building built in 1969. Its minimalistic and stylish terrace has attracted both locals and non-locals to visit and take pictures. In 2018, it reopened as a 5-star luxury hotel.

Notes:

The hotel is built on a ramp, which means if you want to get a full, symmetric, non-slanted picture, you will need vertical correction while editing.

Image style: modern, intense, minimalistic, stylish

Accessibility: public space

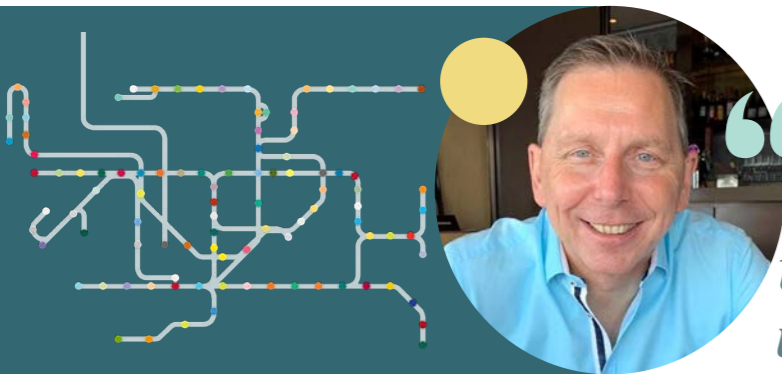
◀ *Walking along the platform bridge beside, you will be able to take side pictures of the hotel, which displays a comprehensive structure of the building.*



RIDING THE HONG KONG RAINBOW

The Story Behind Hong Kong's 99 Unique MTR colours

by Melody Li



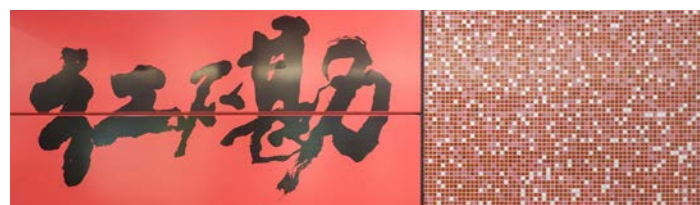
Andrew Mead, head of architecture of the MTR, also the man who chooses the MTR station colours with his team.

“We want to make sure that each station has a unique personality.”

You are in an MTR carriage on the Island Line. As the train pulls into a new station, the first thing you see is not the bustling crowds waiting on the platform, but a wide range of vibrant colours. Even if you miss the radio broadcast, you know immediately which station you are at – red for Central, blue for Admiralty, and green for Wan Chai. We busy commuters have long taken the colours for granted, but what we may overlook is the subtle designs about them, making them the hidden treasures of the MTR.

The history of the colours can be traced back to about 40 years ago when MTR was first established in the 1970s. At that time, Roland Paoletti, the first chief architect of the MTR, gave this new railway system some personality using three key designs – colours, mosaic tiles, and calligraphy.

Aside from aesthetics, these designs were also based on practical considerations. Each station's single colour was designed to differentiate it from others and help orient people, especially since the large population was illiterate at the time. The colours also helped brighten up stations without natural light. Mosaic tiles were chosen as the primary decoration material for the station walls given their availability and low cost.



As shown at the Hung Hom Station, the MTR stations are featured by the use of colour, mosaic tiles, and calligraphy.

Today, Roland's unique designs have already become the indispensable identities of the Hong Kong MTR, and even for the whole Hong Kong city. The current 99 MTR stations all have their exclusive colours, making the MTR distinctive worldwide.

“Hong Kong couldn't be Hong Kong without the MTR. What I am trying to do is to understand our legacy – a system that was about 40 years old, the DNA of the early designs, and the Hong Kong people. The key point is to ensure the new modern stations we produce here reflect Hong Kong,” said Andrew Mead, head of architecture of the MTR, who oversees the design for the new MTR stations.

Principles Behind the Station Colours

In terms of choosing colours for the MTR stations, key principles such as location, station name, and differentiation were taken into account. The surrounding environment of the stations can become the cue of their colours. For instance, the Whampoa Station is blue because it is close to water, while the Ho Man Tin Station is green because it is on a hill. The station's name may also be a source of inspiration. The Lam Tin Station is blue since “Lam” represents blue in Cantonese, while the Wong Tai Sin Station is yellow because “Wong” refers to yellow.

Meanwhile, neighbouring stations often adopt contrasting colours to show the differentiation. For example, the purple colour for Sai Ying Pun Station is in contrast to the green of its neighbour HKU Station. Key stations, including major interchanges and terminals, are coloured red to remind passengers, such as Central and Tsuen Wan.

“People sometimes want a more sophisticated answer from me, but these rules of thumb are the truth, and they work,” Mead said. “We will apply exactly the same rules for the brand-new stations in the future.”

Innovation of the Colours and Designs

If you are a discerning MTR passenger, you will notice that the current MTR stations can be divided into two categories – most of them are monochromatic, following the original design of Roland, while the relatively new stations, such as Ho Man Tin and To Kwa Wan, are a mixture of two different colours, which are produced by Mead's team.

The original monochromatic stations designed by Roland exhibit problems during the test of time. Firstly, passengers may easily lose a sense of direction when surrounded by the same colour. Besides, the existing stations have used up almost all the major colours, making it unrealistic to differentiate the new stations with only a single new colour.

The mixing colours of the new stations tell the solutions – on the premise that each station holds a signature colour, a secondary colour was added in.

The Ho Man Tin Station will be representational here – Being a primarily green station, it features different shades of green and grey throughout the platform.



At Ho Man Tin, the secondary colour grey was introduced in addition to the signature colour green for both the distinct station identity and clearer navigation.

“We want to make sure that each station has a unique personality, but the point is we have run out of colours, so we are introducing a range of secondary colours. Using colours is valid and I think it is part of our heritage, so it is very important that we continue it,” Mead said.

Such combinations of colours not only make the new stations unique, but also enhance the clarity of signs and directions inside the stations.

He said, “We are dealing with people in a very unfamiliar environment, and sometimes we are dealing with people with vision impairments, so using a palette of colours that is easy to see is a very important part of our work.”

Bridging the Old and the New

If you have travelled to the newly-expanded Admiralty and Diamond Hill Station, you may have a clear sense of the new design bridging the old – the new interchange platforms and the existing old ones are integrated well as a whole, yet you can still tell the new from the old.

“There are references to what we have done before, but still, we are always trying to produce something new. An analogy is the design of new cars. No matter what new designs are adopted, Mercedes will still look like Mercedes,” Mead said.

Between the old and new platforms, colours and designs are what serve as the dividing line and connecting point. In Admiralty, the centre of the new platforms was changed into white, creating a contrast from the original blue station and giving the passengers a transition of the colour intensity as they move through the space.

The design for Diamond Hill is even more creative. As the original station is in a dark green colour with some small lighter tiles representing diamonds, Mead's team reinterpreted the idea of diamonds and decorated the new platform with some super-sized diamonds made of more reflective tiles.

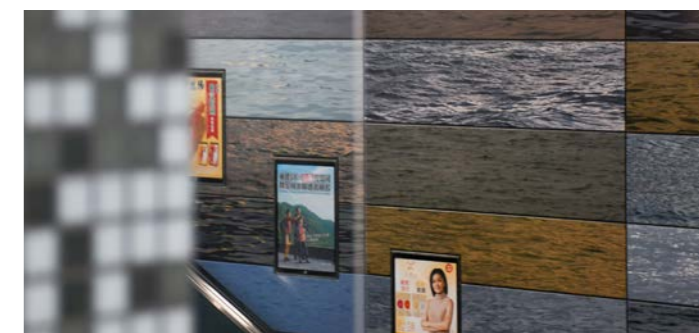


The small “diamonds” of the old Diamond Hill platform are reinterpreted into the supers-sized “diamonds” at the new platform.

Colours and Artworks, Chicken and Eggs

In the selection of station colours, the Exhibition Centre station, the latest addition to the MTR network, took an unusual approach. Instead of following traditional colour selection principles, its colour was defined by the station artwork, Water Memory by Leung Chi Wo.

The artwork, which captures the diverse colours, shades, and textures of Victoria Harbour's water, was found to endow a strong identity to the Exhibition Centre and dominate its colour scheme during the design process. Therefore, the station, initially designed with a pink colour scheme, was then dramatically changed to a mixture of turquoise green and grey to match this art piece.



The colours of the Exhibition Centre Station serve as the background of the artwork Water Memory at the station.

When asked whether the case of the Exhibition Centre Station will be the start of a new principle for the colour selection, Mead said the colours and artworks will be a chicken and egg relationship. “We would get a viewpoint of the station design first, which includes colour, but when you are commissioning new artworks, you never quite know what you are going to get from these accustomed commissioned artworks.”



The MTR, as the underground transport network of Hong Kong, runs through the whole city as an integral component.

MEMORY MAP

by Jamie CLARKE

A Journey Through Personal Memories

Spaces change once they become parts of our past. They become landmarked by the moments we remember them for, rather than the signposts and structures we relied on at the time.

Like the tips of skyscrapers peeking through clouds or church steeples stood out above village rooftops, my landmarks are littered across the places I have called home.

Hong Kong's three-week quarantine mandate spat me out at 7 a.m. on a Saturday in October 2021 dazed, fragile and even more susceptible to sunburn. My partner, Nadège, and I had spent the past 504 hours confined to a double bed, the one-metre gap around its edges and the short walk to the bathroom. Ideally, we had the next 36 hours to find and move into an apartment before work on Monday. We had neither the money nor the inclination to go back to another hotel.

We spent the first few weeks locating the best coffees in our neighbourhood and the cheapest places to eat. We memorised the MTR exit that took us closer to home and what alleyways connected which roads. Over weekends, we sat by the water in West Kowloon Art Park and walked through the high streets in Central. We took the ferry to Lantau and Lamma and, as the number of landmarks we visited grew, so did the city.

Now, a year and a half later, the city is so big I need reminding that those 21 days in quarantine ever happened.



My most recent landmarks are in Vietnam, which I left in 2021 after four years spent living and working in Hanoi. The city is a patchwork of all the cafes and coffees I loved.

At Café Mia, overlooking Westlake, I sat drinking *cà phê cốt dừa* watching the sun come up as the sounds of the city rumbled into action. Then, later, would sit in the same spot drinking Bia Saigon as the sun set, the streetlamps flickered on and the city wound back down.

Our lazy statues lie on the rooftop terrace of a four-storey house. On warm afternoons, I would come up to find a different member of the house, including the cat, asleep in the hammock, and that another neglected plant had wilted and died.

In Ba Vi, a large willow looms over the mountains where we danced amid the tireless flicker of strobe lights and there's a swimming pool in which we spent an hour searching for a house key, only for Harriet to reveal that it had been hidden in her hand the whole time.

There are truck stops up and down Vietnam that stand in our name. Empty warehouses and corrugated iron sheds where we'd stop to eat bowls of pho and fried food, to rest on metal chairs and plastic stools, and to beat each other at cards and pool.

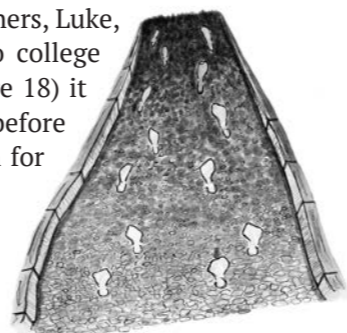
At 22, and for only a year, I moved to South Korea.

I longboarded home on highways under a halo of streetlights. Ate bulgogi and udon under wide blue tents. And got drunk with friends under stadium floodlights.

In Daegu, there's a wooden floor in an empty flat where Nadège and I would sit into the early hours of the morning, falling in love. On a street corner in Seoul, there is a monument to where I first told her that I loved her, and our footprints are set in the alleys we ran down when her stunned response was to burst into tears, turn and run away.

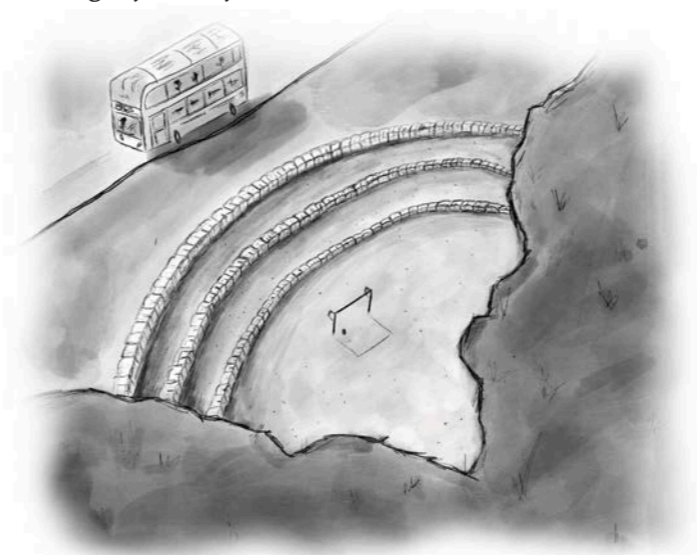
In my suburban hometown in northwest England, my 'city centre' is a small bakery beside a main road. As I grew up, so too did my meetings outside the Greggs at the bottom of my road.

At 10 years old, Greggs is where my friends and I would meet before going to the local swimming pool on a Saturday morning. By 14, from here we were catching buses to Stockport to go shopping or to the cinema. When I was 17, I would wait opposite the bakery on cold mornings to be picked up by Kaney, Kenners, Luke, or Meadows on the way to college and at 18 (but, really, before 18) it is where we would all meet before walking to the train station for nights out in Manchester.



Spreading out from that 'city centre', the landmarks of my hometown are scattered among parks where I drank bottles of cider and ran from police on Friday nights. The rug we danced on in the dining room after dinner. My first kiss towers next to a dimly lit street lamp in Romiley, and an amphitheatre stands on the rec where we played football to the passengers on the 383 bus that drove by on its route.

In Rome, where I was born, my landmarks have worn with time. They are the twisting roots of a formidable garden tree that sent me over the handlebars of the first bike I learnt to ride and its ragged trunk that, in a separate confrontation, I attempted to clamber up only to slip, and slide back down, leaving my tummy red-raw.



As for Hong Kong, I arrived with a girlfriend and, when I leave, will do so with a wife. I will remember here for the busy Kowloon streets we walked down, plotting our next adventure. Between the dwindling number of neon lights, cats sat guarding store fronts and people trundling metal trolleys up and down pavements.

At a dim sum table in Prince Edward, our English and South African families will meet for the first time and navigate the challenges of using chopsticks and understanding each others' accents.

There is a rock on a cliff overlooking the ocean where I sat eating cake on the first birthday spent with my sister in seven years. And there could well be wherever it is I am sitting, with whatever it is I am eating, when I turn 30 and remember the spaces and the people who were with me for birthdays gone by.

And somewhere, perhaps less prominent, will be the twenty-first-floor window in which I sat for 21 days. Watching the sky change colour, the clouds sweep from right to left, and the lights blinking in apartment windows as I imagined what Hong Kong was going to be like.



“ I turned 20 in a city with seven million four hundred fifty-three thousand other people. It was a shabby place, the blinking neon signs of Argyle Street seeping through leaky windows and 36 years' worth of grime and dust. I had known the people celebrating with me for roughly 36 hours. It was nasty and awkward, and I sang Queen a little bit too loud. It was glorious. — Agnieszka Gedek, 25

“ On my first day in Hong Kong, my partner picked me up at the airport and we drove to IFC Mall. We went out onto the observation terrace, overlooking the AIA Ferris Wheel and I held my partner's hand, relishing his presence after months apart. I've been to this spot a hundred times since. I know all the entrances and exits, the quickest route to the ferries, and how, under the mall, there is a minibus that will take me home. It is quite a mundane building. Not the most special place in Hong Kong. But it is pretty special to me. — Blandine Pothin, 32

“ My most memorable place is Kennedy Town waterfront. That's where I had lots of midnight snacks with my university friends. That is also where I met my girlfriend and where I took my graduation photos. — Sampson Ip, 28

“ Knowles Building, University of Hong Kong. This is where I spent most of the time with my university friends in our studio and this is where we also grew so much together. — Tracy Yeung, 28

“ For me, one of my most memorable places is Tsuen Wan Town Hall. It's an ordinary building, but special as I've performed in so many orchestra concerts there since I was 10. Once when I was 19, I played my first charity show and forgot the shoulder rest for my viola. No one noticed, and I was able to get through the entire performance. I was really happy that no one noticed, but my arm was really sore afterwards. — Charmaine Tse, 21

THE SUPERMARKET DREAM

By Hailey YIP

How My Grandfather's Dream became a Hong Kong Reality



Yip Dick Hoi and his wife Cheung So Chun in front of Chai Wan Supermarket. Source: family photos.

Picking up groceries at the supermarket has become second nature to many people, but how did this phenomena happen? When did it make its way to Hong Kong?

The bell rings when you walk into the store. The storekeeper greets you with a smile in his white and blue apron. You order your usual groceries: a pound of rice, three heads of broccoli, and a hundred grams of chicken. He turns around and begins fetching your order from the stacked shelves behind him. He then carefully measures each portion and wraps it with a long piece of twine.

That is what grocery shopping looked like in the late 1800s to early 1900s.

This personalised shopping experience was not only labour-intensive, but also very expensive given the inefficient time it took to serve each customer. As a result, Clarence Saunders decided to open the first ever self-service supermarket in Tennessee during 1916.

Supermarket /'su:.pə ,mɑ:r.kɪt/

a large shop which sells most types of food and other goods needed in the home

His innovation would change the way consumers grocery shop from here on out. Staff members would stack shelves with dry goods and products overnight, and then customers would serve themselves and bring the goods to the cashiers lined up in rows.

Not only did this self-serve method reduce labour costs, but also increased production value given that the personalised practice was gone. Though many shopkeepers feared the risk of shoplifting, the economic gain still outweighed the cost.

THE LEGACY OF YIP DICK HOI (1933 - 2023)

“師傅，前面有落！ Driver, getting off at the next stop!”

The familiar words that Yip Dick Hoi heard everyday as a Hong Kong minibus driver in the 1960s. The hours were long. The heat was unbearable. But he still got behind the wheel everyday to raise his family of four including his wife and two young sons. Yip didn't mind the monotonous drives, but the countless parking tickets from lunch stops and bathroom breaks drove him crazy. A day's work couldn't even cover the costs of the deadly white slip. He decided it was time for a change. A job that didn't require commuting and parking.



The four units that would become Chai Wan Supermarket.

THE SUPERMARKET DREAM

During the 1970s, the government began its plan to urbanise the Sai Wan (西灣) area, now known as Chai Wan (柴灣). It was going to be the new residential district, so the government allocated certain spaces for essential businesses to take place, such as a pharmacy, a library, and a supermarket.

Spaces for these businesses have already been chosen, but it was up to the public to place bids for the right to run them. Seeing the opportunity arise, Yip, alongside his two minibus driver friends Lai Bing Him and Cheng Hin Cheung, decided to submit a \$400,000 bid in hopes of running their own supermarket.

The trio came second in the bidding race, but a criminal record found on the winner's file turned their dream into a reality. In 1979, they won the lease and opened Chai Wan Supermarket (柴灣超級市場) - the first-ever Chinese-run supermarket business in Chai Wan. The team was small: three bosses, four cashiers, and four stock clerks. None of them had experience in running a supermarket. Stocking. Ordering. Pricing. Tracking. They had to learn on the job.

Being the first in this specialised retail sector, the three thought they hit a jackpot, but business was slow. Businesses were set up, but people have not moved into the newly-built apartments yet. Rows of dry goods and household products filled the shelves, but rarely any left them. They feared that the supermarket would leave them in deficit. There was still a monthly \$50,000 rent to pay. Employees to feed. Suppliers to imburse. Yip would often stand outside the market entrance, hoping to see ladies with a trolley step inside.

After two years of deficit and waiting, their luck turned around when the residential district finally lived up to its name. As more and more people moved in, their business began to soar. Products were emptying shelves faster than they could restock. The days where they feared they couldn't pay suppliers back were coming to an end. Instead, suppliers were now begging Yip for the best shelf spot in the hottest supermarket on the eastern side of Hong Kong Island.

The Supermarket Insider

Wet markets are known for their fresh produce and meat selection. Convenience stores had your everyday snack foods and drinks. So why did Hong Kong need supermarkets?

Hong Kong supermarkets sold everything else that its competitors didn't. The city was becoming more and more fast paced, so its people relied on convenience and products that could last longer. Supermarkets sold dry products, frozen goods, household products, alcohol, and tobacco. What made this new business stand out was the variety that convenience stores lacked. Also, many people just wanted to enjoy the air conditioning that supermarkets offered.

But where do supermarkets get their products from?

Many have heard of the door-to-door salesman job. Turns out that position also exists in the retail sector. Given that Hong Kong is an international city that heavily relies on trading with other countries, the city was filled with importing companies. They were able to bring in the best household products. The top canned foods. And even the most expensive alcohol.

Marketers from these local suppliers would then visit supermarkets with product catalogues. Shopkeepers would then choose the products that they felt would sell well with the Hong Kong locals. The suppliers would bring in the products plus a few extras as rebate. The clerks then stacked the shelves with the products marked up by a few dollars. At the end of the month, the shopkeeper would pay the cost of the products to the supplier, while keeping the difference made from the mark up. That is how revenue is made in a supermarket.

But when products don't sell, supermarkets lose money unless the supplier is willing to give a refund. For big brands like Coca Cola and expensive goods like cigarettes, the companies require cash on delivery.

If the supermarket is popular, suppliers will not only try hard to win their business, but also offer perks in hopes of securing good shelf spots. Like the front page of the newspaper, every supplier wants their products to be featured in front of the store.



Competition was tough for local supermarkets, especially when the famous ParknShop and Wellcome chains began to expand. The only way they could come out on top was to open when others didn't. If ParknShop and Wellcome opened until 6 p.m. every night, Chai Wan Supermarket would stay open till dawn. Making profit was essential to them. Yip and his partners had all sent their children to Canada for schooling because everyone wanted the American Dream. But that dream came with a hefty price. So without children to care for at home, the bosses and their wives would take turns running the shop after their employees left. Every night. Every holiday. Chai Wan Supermarket would be open. By running the store on their own after hours, they were able to save more on labour costs.



Yip Dick Hoi managed the logistics for the supermarket.

As their business grew with experience, Yip's wife Cheung So Chun focused more on marketing and branding. Corporations would host competitions for local supermarkets to see who could better promote their products, and of course make the most revenue. Unfortunately, social media and television commercials didn't make the cut back then. Supermarkets relied on flashy display cases. Soda cans stacked in large pyramids. Cardboard cutouts with lights.



The grand opening of Chai Wan Supermarket's second store.

Chai Wan Supermarket suddenly wasn't just a place for your household needs, but also a free television program. The once minibus driver was now abandoning his oversized t-shirts for suits and ties. Winning various promotional competitions from Vitasoy to Remy Martin, Chai Wan Supermarket finally had its mark on the map.

In 1983, they decided to open a second supermarket a few streets down from the main. But history was repeating itself once again. Residents had not filled up that side of

Chai Wan yet, so the store was very quiet. Afraid that a second store would be burdensome to their finances, they decided to rent it out to ParknShop and focus on their main store.

Instead of hearing "Getting off at the next light!" everyday, Yip was now accustomed to hearing "Good morning, boss" and "What's the new promotion?" This job was hard work, but he loved the smiles and friendships he made with the Chai Wan residents. This was his second home.

But after running a supermarket for 20 years, Yip felt it was time to say goodbye. He loved his supermarket, but he loved his family more. He wanted to immigrate to Canada to be with his sons. He ended the lease in 1998, and the Vanguard supermarket chain immediately took its place. Now, in 2023, a USelect has taken its place, continuing the supermarket legacy.



Yip Dick Hoi, his wife Cheung So Chun, and their two sons, Johnny and Lawrence say goodbye to Hong Kong. Source: family photos

Yip was known as one of Hong Kong's supermarket founders, but to me, he was a loving grandfather. I am so grateful I got to experience his legacy. Sitting inside the shopping baskets. Making music on the cash register. The supermarket was my Disneyland. Even though the store left his ownership when I was a toddler, I will never forget the number of ice cream cones and Sprite soda pops I "shoplifted" from him. It took a few years for me to learn that I could not just take as I pleased whenever I walked into a supermarket. To this day, Sprite is still my favourite pop.



Yip Dick Hoi treats his granddaughter Hailey Yip to her first soda.



DENSITY IN THE AFTERLIFE

By Wulfric ZHANG

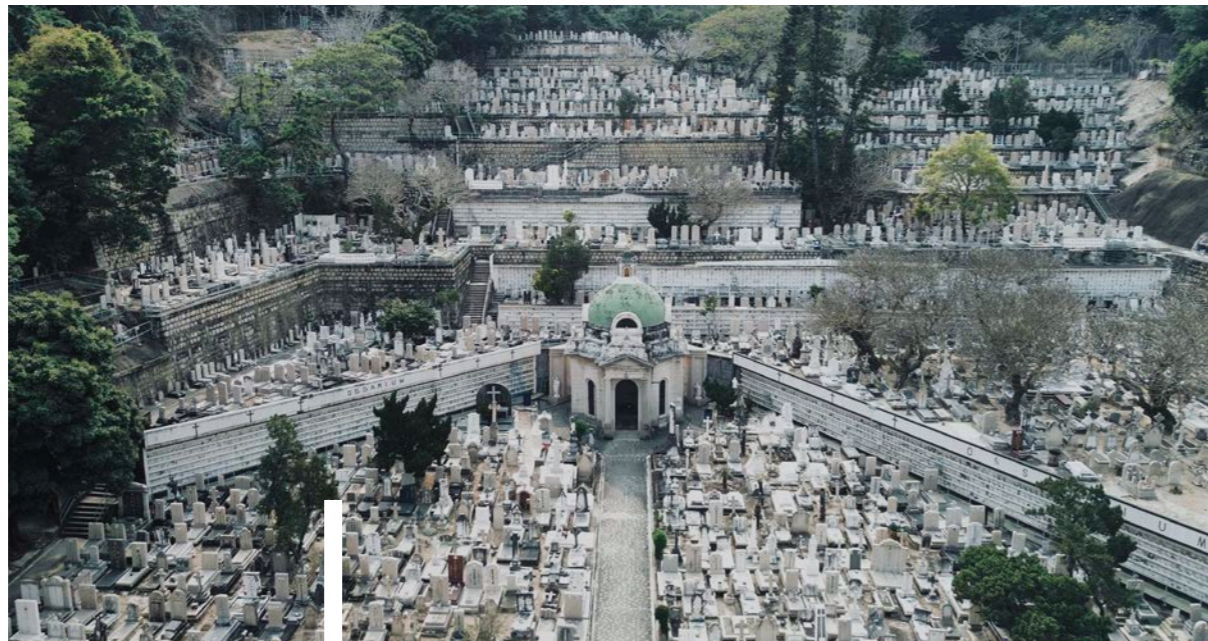
A Bird's-Eye View of Hong Kong Cemeteries

These hills, which stand out amidst the concrete of the city, are the place where thousands of Hong Kong residents go after their death. Hong Kong's cemeteries contain a wide variety of gravestones from all cultures and religions.

In traditional Chinese Feng Shui, building cemeteries on hillsides meant gathering "positive energy" while blocking the negative. But from an architectural point of view, cemeteries were built on hillsides to avoid rainwater, wind, and sand that could erode graves and tombstones.



Just next to the Tsuen Wan Cemetery, Riviera Gardens is one of the most famous properties in Tsuen Wan. According to an agency website, the price of HK\$15,000 per square foot far exceeds the average in the New Territories.

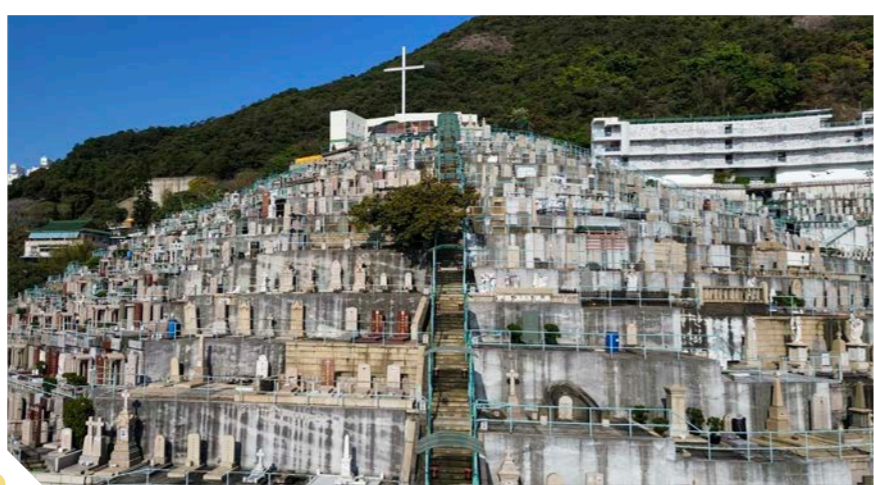


Chinese superstitions says it is bad luck to live next to cemeteries.

St. Michael's Catholic Cemetery is built around the chapel which was first built in 1868. It can contain 23,000 graves. Even when the former Bishop of Hong Kong died, the cemetery still needed to vacate a tomb of a clergyman before burying him.

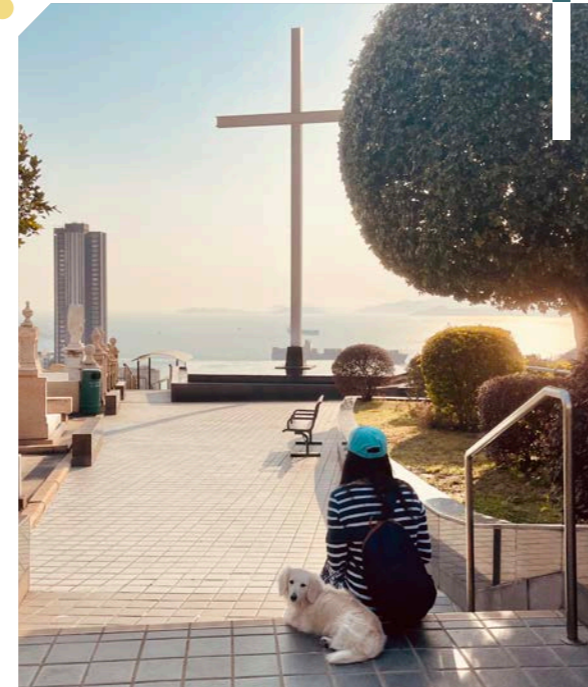
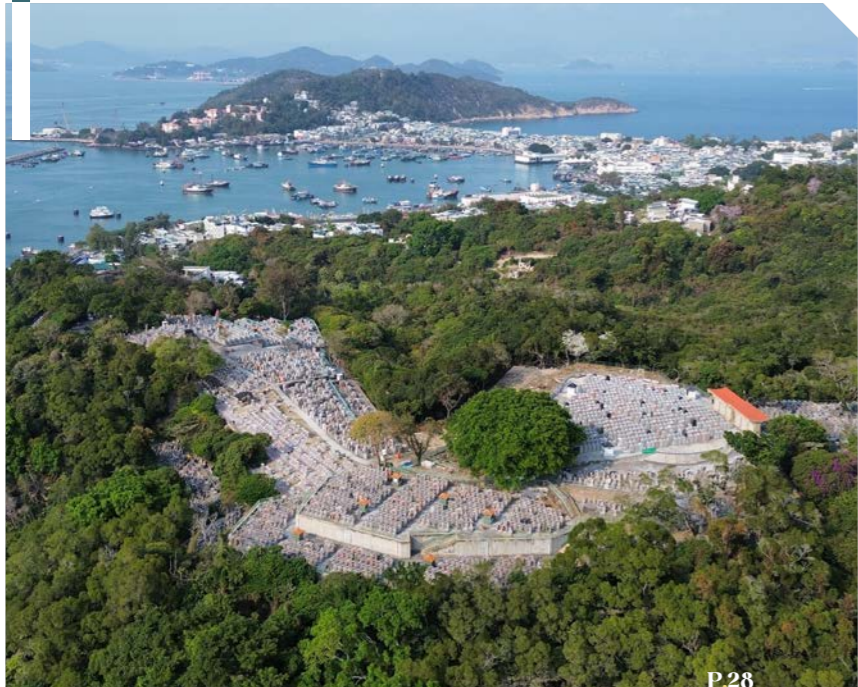
Given Hong Kong's dense population, residential buildings are built next to cemeteries in Hong Kong. However, people don't seem to mind at all. This symbiotic relationship between citizens and urban spaces like cemeteries have already become a part of Hong Kong culture.

Inevitably, the concern with the lack of space still stands even among the dead. People have to enter a lottery conducted by the government in order to buy a permanent spot in public cemeteries. For those who choose private cemeteries, the cost can be 10 to 50 times more expensive.



The sea breeze and the sunset make for a great walk under the cross at the top of the hill of Pokfulam Christian Cemetery. But if you want to get such a view after you die, you need to save at least HK\$300,000.

If you want to go to Cheung Chau's most famous attraction, Cheung Po Chai Cave, then the quickest way is through this huge cemetery, where there is a huge contrast between the peace and quiet and the bustle of the waterfront shopping streets.



In the aerial photo taken in the Pokfulam Christian Cemetery, these chessboard-like rectangles are tombs built on a hill, with a long staircase leading to the top of the mountain.



Illustration based on HSBC's construction photo.

SHIFTING SPACE

By Hannah LEE

Why People Thought HSBC Is A Transformer Building

You would be able to tell at first glance that it is distinct from the rest of Hong Kong's skyscrapers.

The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) headquarters had been demolished and reerected in three major transformations. In the last iteration, the spectacular 47-story rectangular prism was built in 1985, with four basement levels and its long sides oriented to the panoramic views of the harbor.

Taking seven years to complete from conception to construction, the headquarters has become the icon for the region's largest bank.

Standing and defying the test of time

HSBC was found in 1865, in the wake of British victories in the Opium Wars against China and colonization of Hong Kong. The bank used to specialize in the opium trade between Europe and Asia. At the time, it was indispensable to the propensity of Hong Kong and for strengthening of the British Empire, as written by historian Eric Toussaint.

Standing at a 179m, the HSBC building was planned during the 1997 handover. The 1997 transfer of power casted a cloud over the city, sparking people's fear of possible changes and uncertainties to their way of life.

HSBC put a brand-new structure in place as a symbol of assurance to people who were packing and set to leave at the time. Yet, the HSBC headquarters soon found itself at the heart of controversies for its seemingly deconstructable skeleton and what it signifies.

The first tower without a central core

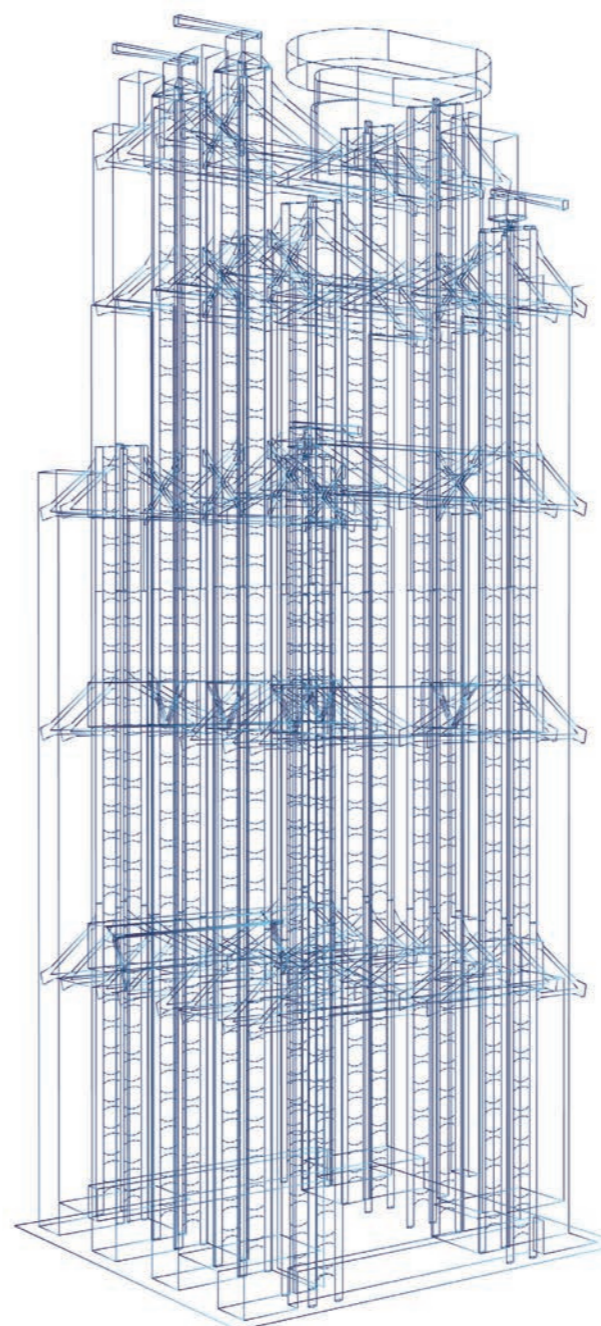
The headquarters was built upon a collection of prefabricated pieces manufactured and imported from around the globe for an on-site assemblage.

According to the Journal of Design History's "Globalizing Corporate Identity in Hong Kong: Rebranding Two Banks", such process of tailor-making architectural components for the building is characterized as "hand-crafting high tech." A notable example would be "sanitary modules" which comprise the bathroom facilities for each floor. Customized on a specially constructed production line in Japan, they were fitted down to the finest detail before being shipped to Hong Kong.

The headquarters was the most expensive of its time, costing approximately HK\$5.2 billion.



Simulating the construction of HSBC headquarters with playground blocks. Illustration inspired by construction site.



179-metre-high HSBC headquarters.

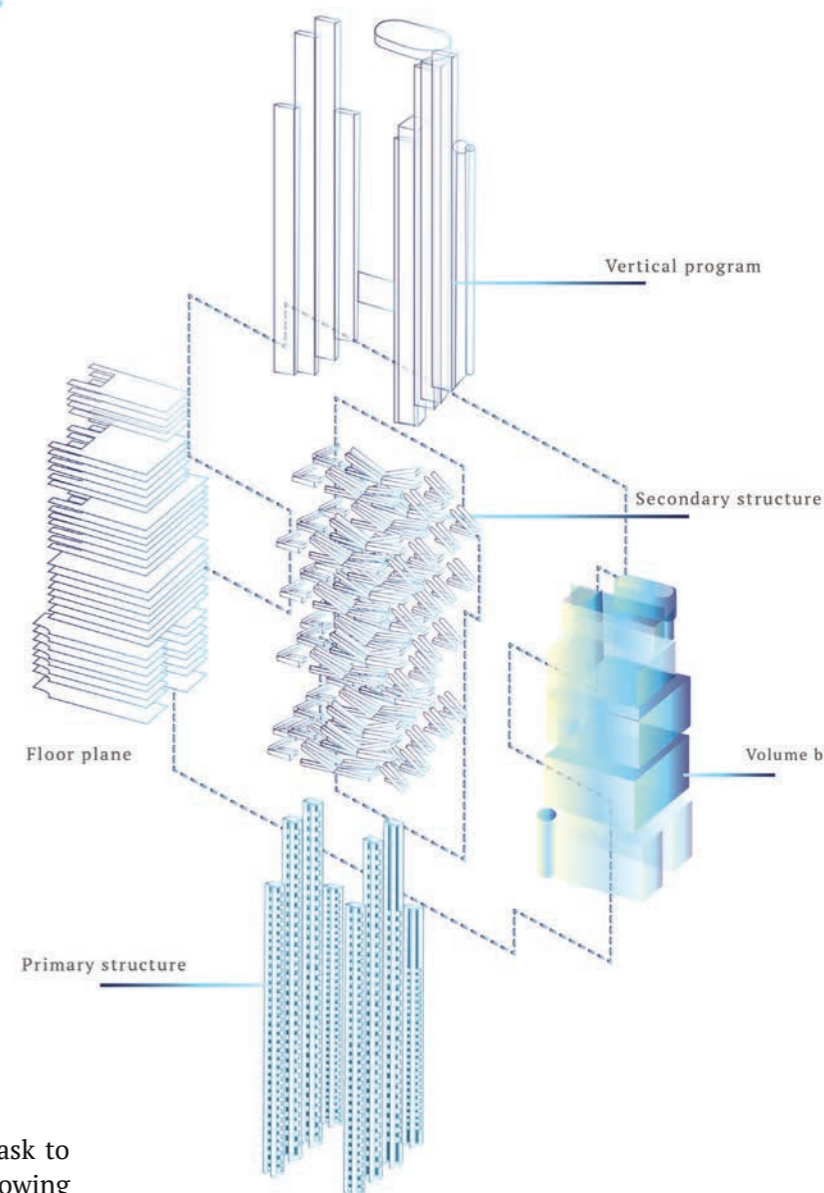
Norman Foster, a British architect, was given the task to design "the best bank headquarters in the world" following an invited international competition. The final masterpiece put him on the map as a top-notch label.

Dubbing the transformer building as "kits of parts", the book "Hong Kong Bank: The building of Norman Foster's masterpiece" shows that the structure resorts to a stacking technique without an internal supporting structure, throughout the suspended floor plates, double-height trusses, a central atrium space, lower open plaza and basements floors.

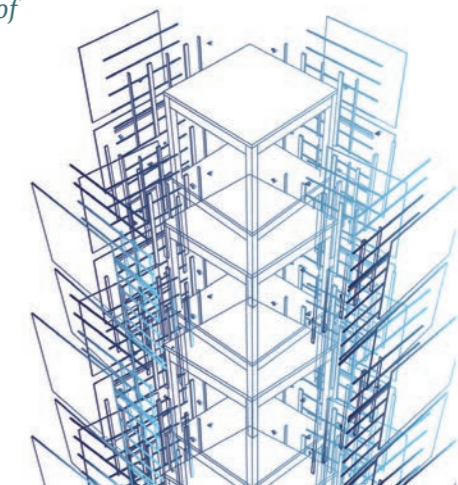
179

The steel-framed mast structure allows architects to push the mechanical and service cores to the perimeter, to create a deep atrium in the center and maximize the functionality of space.

Although unintended by Foster's design, the headquarters is rumored to be dismantlable, down into pieces, to be reassembled all over again from top to bottom.



Anatomy dissection of HSBC structure.



A new use for the ground space of HSBC

Walking into the building, you would be in awe at how the office floors are raised off the ground, which have left plenty of space for a sheltered plaza and allowed pedestrians to pass underneath the building. The entrance to the plaza features a 40m high atrium, adorned with mirrors on top to reflect the sunlight, which allows light to enter the atrium.

With a pair of escalators ascending through a latticed glass floor and arriving in a tall central atrium filled with natural light, the brightness and transparency of the space is owed to what Foster describes as a “mirror scoop” fitted to the south facade of the tower, which bounces daylight onto the mirrored ceiling of the atrium.



Still photo of HSBC ground floor. Source: JINI live video tour, Diana Jou.

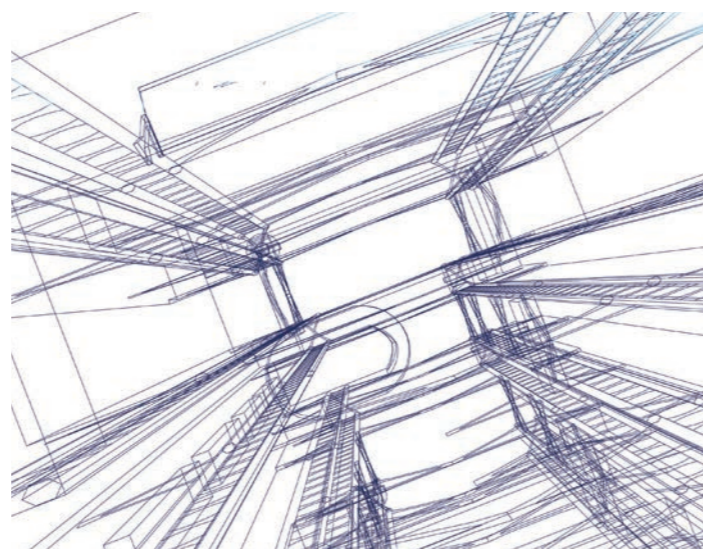
Without surprise, the wide open space has since become a popular hangout spot, a cultural space for many city dwellers over the weekend.

Tala Garcia, a domestic helper in her 20s who has worked in Hong Kong for five years, is one of the building’s loyal visitors.

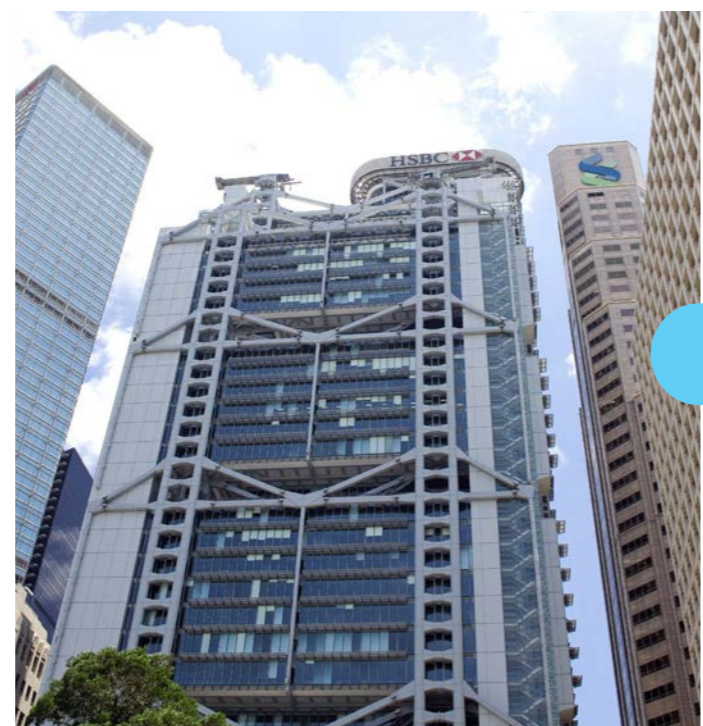
“We just love the entire open area all laid out with good natural lighting that seeps in,” Garcia said, explaining why she always returns to the headquarters’ plaza.

According to “Foster Tower: A Global Architecture, the facades” are also embellished with sunshade louvers to reduce solar penetration and conserve energy.

The book also explains that the building is connected to the Victoria Harbour, using the seawater for heating and cooling. To run the air conditioning system, the sea water is brought in and chilled before traveling through to the air conditioning unit; the thermostat then uses the cooled water to cool the air.



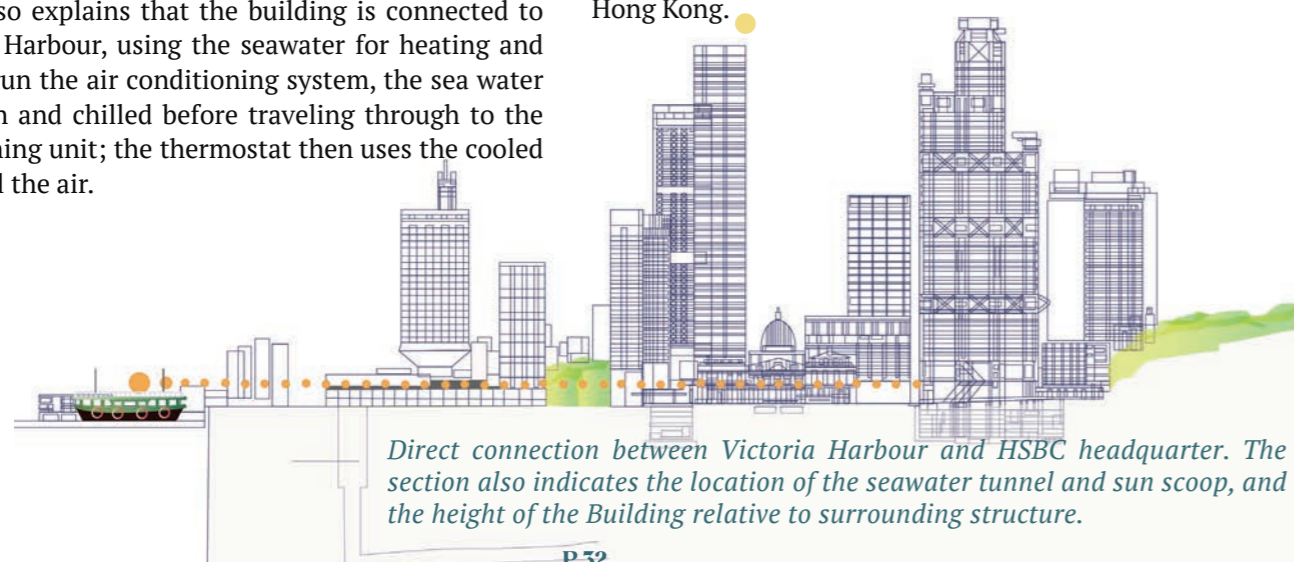
Inside of HSBC Headquarter from bottom-up angle.



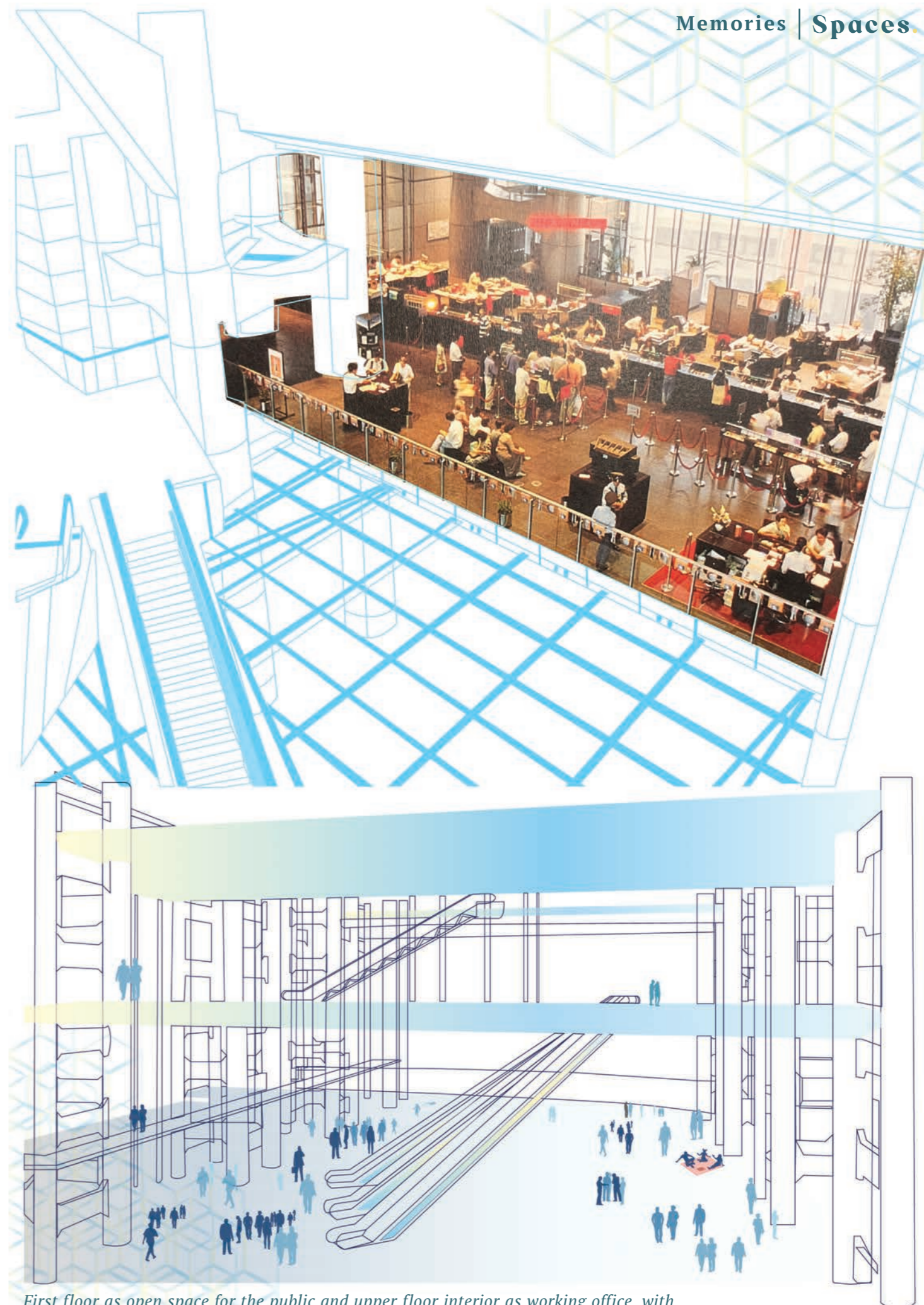
HSBC headquarters during the day. Source: Ben Bryant; Shutterstock.

This required extensive engineering to work out where the pipes were to be located and how they would be laid.

To this day, the headquarters remains an iconic building in Hong Kong.



Direct connection between Victoria Harbour and HSBC headquarter. The section also indicates the location of the seawater tunnel and sun scoop, and the height of the Building relative to surrounding structure.



First floor as open space for the public and upper floor interior as working office, with photo from the book Hong Kong’s “Central District”.

BELOW GROUND

A Deeper Look at our city's Drainage System

By Feifan YU

Happy Valley underground stormwater storage tank.

When you walk down the streets of Hong Kong, you pass by many roadside gullies and manhole covers with radial patterns. That means there is a stormwater drainpipe beneath your feet.

These underground drain pipes make up the whole stormwater drainage system of Hong Kong, which totals more than 2,800 kilometers. That is longer than the distance from Hong Kong to Beijing.

With an average annual rainfall of about 2400mm, Hong Kong has one of the highest rainfalls in the Pacific Rim. During exceptionally heavy rainfall, flooding may occur in low-lying areas and natural flood plains in the rural areas of the northern part of the New Territories.

Hong Kong also suffers from severe flooding during typhoon season, which is usually from April to October. In 1995, there were about 90 flooding black spots in Hong Kong, with serious ones larger than 100 hectares, the size of 14 soccer fields, resulting in substantial socio-economic losses.

The Drainage Services Department (DSD) was established by the government in September 1989 to provide effective approaches dealing with flooding issues. To protect the city from flooding, they built and kept improving the network of tunnels and dikes, hidden just below the streets.

How does the system work?

The DSD is responsible for flood prevention. The work includes processing daily reports of blockage in public drains, regular inspecting electrical, mechanical, and structural works, rehabilitating aged and damaged stormwater channels, and desilting drainage facilities.

However, drainage improvement in urban areas faces another type of construction problem.

Since most of the roads in Hong Kong are densely packed with utilities, such as cables, telephone lines, and gas pipes, traditional drainage works with excavation techniques inevitably require construction under existing underground utilities, thus affecting traffic and causing inconvenience to the public.

Therefore, the DSD tries to reduce such work. In addition to the broader use of trenchless excavation techniques to lay drainage pipes, they have adopted more innovative improvement options, including the use of stormwater drainage tunnels to intercept and convey stormwater and the construction of underground flood storage tanks for the temporary storage of stormwater.

Stormwater drainage tunnel

At present, there are four giant stormwater drainage tunnels throughout Hong Kong, including the Hong Kong Island West, Lai Chi Kok, Tsuen Wan stormwater drainage tunnels, and the Kai Tak Stormwater Transfer Scheme.

Those large tunnels can intercept rainwater midway and directly discharge it to the sea, reducing the upstream flow to the downstream urban runoff.

The Hong Kong Island West drainage tunnel, the longest and largest one with a length of 11 kilometers from Tai Hang to Cyberport, can drain away nearly 7,500 cubic meters – equivalent to three standard swimming pools of rainwater in a minute.



Lai Chi Kok Drainage Tunnel. Source: The Drainage Services Department.



Tai Hang Tung Stormwater Storage Tank. Source: Drainage Services Department.

Underground flood storage tank

Another method is to build a large underground water storage tank. These tanks can temporarily store rainwater upstream so that when the rain subsides, rainwater can be pumped out and the downstream drainage system has enough time to drain, which reduces the risk of flooding.

The construction of flood storage tanks underneath Happy Valley Stadium began in 2012 and was opened in March 2017. The first and second phases of the underground flood storage tank with a total capacity of 60,000 cubic meters is equivalent to 24 standard swimming pools.

After its operation, the flood discharge capacity of Happy Valley and the neighboring Wan Chai area was increased to withstand a 50-year rainstorm, protecting the lives and property of the people in the area.

River Management

The capacity of natural rivers can only cope with river flooding about once every two years.

In order to increase the capacity of the river to cope with the expected extreme conditions, the rivers need to be straightened, widened, deepened, and laminated.

After the completion of the river management projects in Shenzhen River, Wutong River, Shuangye River, Shanbei River, Kam Tin River, and Plain River, the risk of flooding in most flood-prone areas has been greatly reduced.

The Yuen Long Drainage Bypass was specially built to divert stormwater from Yuen Long Town Center. In addition to expanding the capacity of the river, river training projects will also grow many plants on both sides of the river, and even build artificial wetlands to provide a living environment for wildlife.

Maintenance

The effectiveness of a drainage system is easily affected by many factors.

Sediments can be slowly deposited in drains and drainage channels, affecting their capacity. Debris, bulky objects and leaves, and branches can be washed into drainage channels, severely blocking the drainage system.

Land development can affect the flow path, causing more flow than expected at some points in the drainage system.

Since the rainy season in Hong Kong runs from April to October, it is not easy to complete the desilting, maintenance, and repair work for the drainage facilities within such a tight time frame.

DSD Secretary for Development Wong Wai Lum said every year they remove up to 500 tons of sand and silt from the four drainage tunnels and four flood storage ponds, which is equivalent to the weight of about 34 double-decker buses.

Since 1995, the Drainage Services Department has eliminated a total of 127 flooding black spots. Now, only four flooding black spots remain, one of which is Chatham Road South. Its flood control project is expected to start in the third quarter of this year in hopes that this flooding black spot can eventually be removed from the list.

The large scale of flood prevention facilities now includes over 2,400 km of underground stormwater drains, over 360 km of man-made watercourses, four underground flood storage ponds with a total capacity of over 180,000 m³ (equivalent to 72 standard swimming pools), and four stormwater drainage tunnels with a total length of about 21 km.

With these large-scale long-term structural measures completed one after another, Hong Kong's flooding black spots will be eliminated someday.

These major underground projects will also help Hong Kong cope with the increased and more devastating natural disasters that climate change brings in the future.



Bump engine of Happy Valley underground stormwater storage tank.

GREEN SPACES

Places to soak in nature

When people think of Hong Kong, they think of skyscrapers and bright lights. People tend to forget that it is also a place full of natural and cultural assets. Here are three places to learn about Hong Kong's natural environments.

By Zack CHIANG

Kadoorie Farm & Botanic Garden

Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden stretches across Tai Po and Yuen Long districts. The farm is an ecological conservation and education centre, with a number of facilities housing a variety of wildlife, such as reptiles, mammals and birds.



Kadoorie Farm is also a small zoo with different species of animals around the world.



Children can participate in different activities held by the farm and connect to the nature.

Amongst the many attractions is the Piers Jacobs Wildlife Sanctuary, which houses the Red Muntjacs (a deer species), Sasa and Didi. Both of which were rescued having been found orphaned in the wild here in Hong Kong.

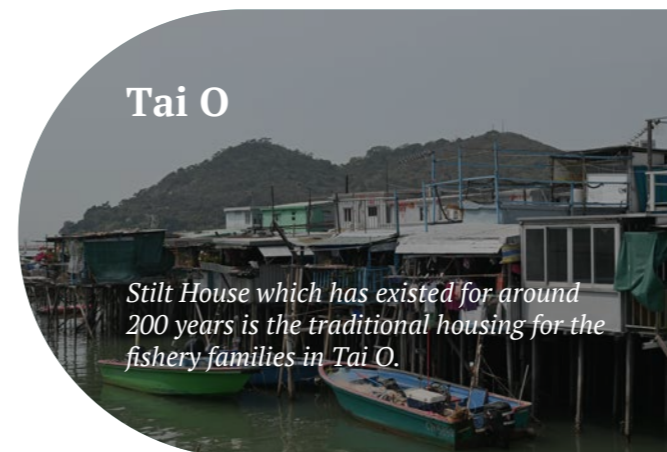
As for the Garden, Kadoorie is home to a variety of plants and crops that can be viewed throughout the park. They promote organic farming through exhibitions that aim to educate visitors on practices such as aquaponics, a food production system that raises fish and plants.

The farm hosts a number of activities to help raise the importance of animal conservation. Their event, "Animal Encounters," aims to bring visitors into closer contact with wildlife by sharing their stories. Part of the vision at Kadoorie Farm is to provide opportunities to get closer to nature, and to learn more about the current efforts to protect the environment. It gives us a chance to think about what we can do in our daily life in order to live more sustainably.



Kadoorie plants various organic crops then sells those to visitors.

Tai O



Stilt House which has existed for around 200 years is the traditional housing for the fishery families in Tai O.

Tai O, located on the western part of Lantau island, is famous for its natural landscapes and hiking routes, and is a wonderful cultural asset to Hong Kong.

Tai O was once a fishing village, but as large companies monopolised the trade, the village has gradually lost its traditional lifestyle. The stilt houses, however, remain an iconic image. The traditional structures have been preserved by the government and there are still residents living on top of the water.



Traditional elements are integrated into the daily life items, such as the drain cover.

Temples are another crucial component of fishing culture, protecting the health of local residents and keeping them safe whilst away on fishing trips. Pay a visit to Kwan Tai or Tin Hau Temple in the village, as well as different exhibition centres, such as the Tai O Rural Committee Historic and Cultural Showroom, to learn about fishing culture and the local history of fishing and salt production.

Vendors shouting prices of freshly caught seafood and making the traditional local snack by leaving egg yolks to dry in the sun creates a bustling, vibrant Tai O atmosphere. Also known as the island of cats, feline paintings can be seen down streets across the island.

Located in Kowloon East, CIC-Zero Carbon Park is the first zero-carbon building in Hong Kong. The park is surrounded by tall buildings, but is an area where the government is striving to promote urban greening.

The facilities inside the park are made from sustainable materials. The solar panels on the main building and the kiosk roofs generate power from sunlight. The jogging track that circles the park is covered with special material that absorbs sunlight to generate power.

CIC-Zero Carbon Park



Sitting in the Kowloon East, CIC-ZCP serves as the "green lungs" in the city.

The cafe and playground offer a calm space for members of the public to come and relax, amid some 200 species of plants that serve as habitats for local birds and other animals in Hong Kong.

Inside the main building, an exhibition highlights the features and the history of Hong Kong's sustainable construction industry, and the different facilities promote awareness of living sustainably. Visitors can book a guided tour on the CIC-ZCP website.



Kwun Tong is a place where the government trying to achieve urban greening. The green elements are combined with facilities or art works.

PROTECTING THE OCEAN

By Larissa GAO

Saving The Sea With AI & 3D Printing



Although many people do not see the ocean every day, it covers 71% of the Earth's surface. It plays an important role in people's lives, and especially for Hong Kong people.

With a total coastline of 456 kilometers surrounding the city, Hong Kong people take advantage of it through watersports, such as kayaking and snorkeling.

However, human activities cause significant problems to the ocean ecology. According to the World Wide Fund for Nature – Hong Kong, the Hong Kong government collects 15,000 tons of waste per year in its waters.

Meanwhile, the habitats of some creatures have been ruined by human activities alongside the coastline.

Luckily, there are groups of experts dedicated to protecting the environment with ground-breaking technology.

Samyuktha Sriram is one of them.



This bot was sponsored by Modern Terminals, a large container terminal in Hong Kong, according to Clearbot's Facebook post on Dec. 8, 2022. "In celebration of their 50th Anniversary, we will be cleaning up pollution from the waters of Angler's Beach over the next few months," the post read. Source: Clearbot.



Collection of certain kinds of trash like bottles. Source: Clearbot.

AI-generated Bot

Sriram works as the head of business development and marketing at Clearbot, a tech startup in Hong Kong.

"Clearbot is an electric autonomous robot that we have created and allows us to do everything from pollution recovery to surveillance," Sriram said. "So, we basically came up with the solution to make marine tasks more environmentally friendly and smarter."

The AI-generated robots, which look like small motorboats, have already been used in multiple places in Hong Kong and India, she added.

"After we started our business, there were a lot of uncertainties and unexpected situations that did happen," she said. "For example, there were a lot of extreme weather events, when the water was really hot, and our bot would be affected."

These unexpected situations ended up helping the development of this start-up company in the long term.

"Because we found the situational challenges, we have been able to improve our bots and keep weather conditions in mind so it doesn't happen again."

However, there were some limitations to this tool, as it could only collect certain kinds of trash, like bottles, that could fit within the width of the entry of the board.

"But all over this year, we would actually be increasing that to make a bigger bot that is able to carry a lot more than previously," she said. "Now it is able to collect 200 kg at one time."



3D Printing

Professor Christian Lange and Professor Weijen Wang from the University of Hong Kong use 3D printing for a project in a remote village in Hong Kong.

Wang choose Kuk Po because it has a diverse ecological system.

Most of the seashores have been changed because of human activities. However, like many border zones with China, Kuk Po has been “frozen” since 1949 because it is a restricted area where “there is no sufficient infrastructure provision with limited road access,” Wang added.

Villagers living in those areas were offered to move to public housing in a new town and many immigrated to other countries, like the U.K., Wang said.

“The historic village was preserved because of the depopulation in that area,” he said. “And nature comes back.”

In the tidal zones, creatures must deal with different situations within a day. 3D printing terracotta could help creatures cope with these situations, like helping them escape from predators. Its design was inspired by Chinese ceramic stools.

“If you go and see that terracotta, you will find that many crabs live there,” he said. “It is truly a by-product of my project.”

“The 3D printing technique works beautifully for small-scale projects like this,” he said. “But when civil engineers worked on projects of coastline protection, the magnitudes of that are much bigger than this.”

The use of this technology for other projects in larger regions has not been sufficient on its own, he said.



Robotic 3D clay printing method. Source: Chen Zhaowei; Centre for Chinese Architecture and Urbanism; Fabrication and Material Technologies Lab.



A tidal stool submerged underwater at high tide. Source: Christian J. Lange; Centre for Chinese Architecture and Urbanism; Fabrication and Material Technologies Lab.

“The effective way to handle the protection of the habitats is to use the mixed techniques that could work best in different civil engineering projects,” he added.



Tidal stools exposed to the air at low tide. Source: Christian J. Lange; Centre for Chinese Architecture and Urbanism; Fabrication and Material Technologies Lab.

While the situation of ocean ecology is getting better and better in Kuk Po, Wang said he thinks more actions should be taken by other people if they want to protect Hong Kong’s ocean ecology as a whole.

“I care about environmental issues, and I am doing what I can do,” he said. “That is just a tiny village. It is not realistic for me to help Hong Kong with all issues.”

Hong Kong government

As for what the government has done to protect water environments, Sriram said the government worked with Clearbot to do pollution recovery.

“We do weed removal,” she said. “Those are invasive plants that could harm the local ecosystems.”

But since there are many important things that should be addressed, “it is not the government’s priority to protect the ocean environment,” Wang said.

At the moment, Wang added that the government is giving priority to building more houses in order to solve the housing crisis for Hong Kong’s younger generation.

A ROOM OF THEIR OWN

by Hugo NOVALES

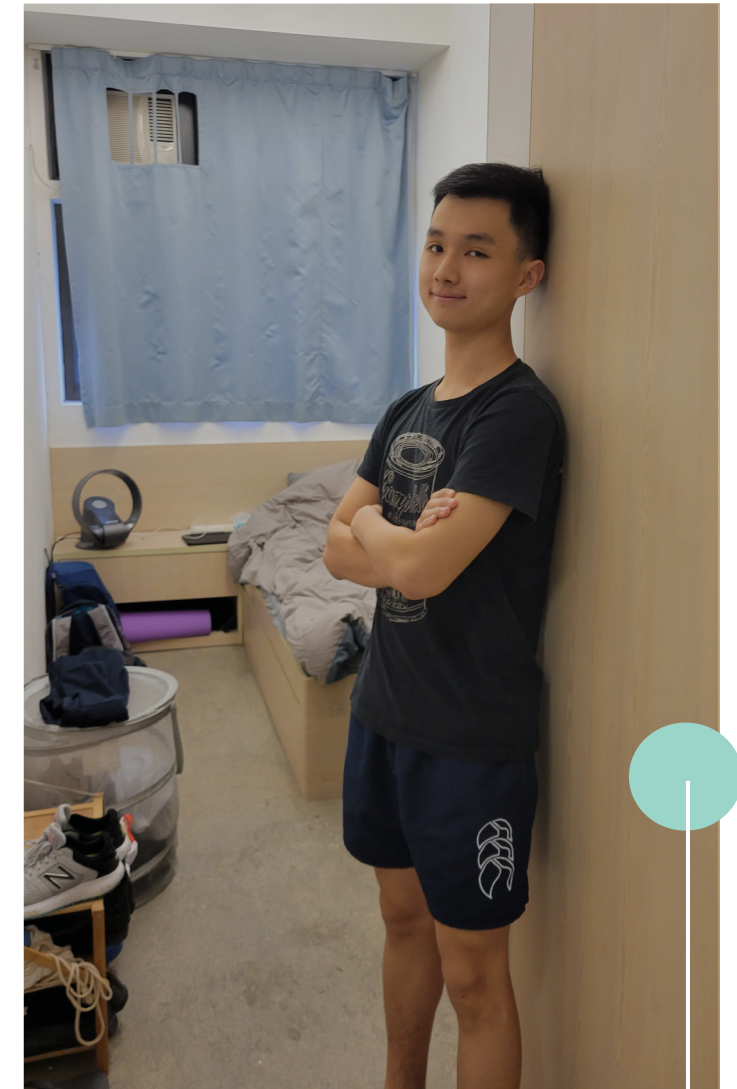
Over 33,000 students attend HKU on a yearly basis, but not all of them choose to live in the various residence halls scattered around campus. Those that do, find that having their own space on-campus is worth much more than living beyond HKU’s borders.

Justin Lau, 20, is one of those students. He grew up in Wu Kai Sha and was commuting to campus during his first semester at HKU, a trip that took him over an hour each way. Then last September, he got accepted to live in Shun Hing College, one of the student residences in Kennedy Town. Since moving in, he has devoted himself to his new community by joining the event planning committee that organises activities for students.

“This place has a lot of good memories and positive vibes for me,” he said. “I feel like if I can make a difference here, a positive difference, then I would have made my experience here a more rich and rewarding one.”

As one of the few locals amongst an international crowd, Lau often translates for his friends who can’t speak Cantonese. He has become an aid when it comes to Hong Kong culture.

“A lot of the things I keep in my room aren’t for me, they’re for my friends,” he said, while referencing the stockpile of snacks on his desk.



Justin Lau, a first-year French and Sociology student, stands in the doorway of his room in Shun Hing College.

Oreos, sports drinks, chocolate wafers, and even traditional Chinese medicine are just a few of the items he keeps on hand for whenever he hangs out with friends.

“I think being here and being around people who know the same things and are exposed to the same things but come from different backgrounds really pushes me to lay down my understanding and try to see the world from their perspective,” he said.



An assortment of snacks, including this brand of Chinese medicine, are what Lau keeps on hand in case any of his friends are in need.

A NEW ENVIRONMENT

Afghanistan to Hong Kong

by Safiullah AHMADZAI

Despite the Hong Kong government's ban on visas for Afghan people in Hong Kong, Tahera Hashimi, 27, and I, two Afghan students, were able to move to Hong Kong under a university scholarship.

I used to be a journalist at one of the local television stations in Herat province in western Afghanistan. Tahera was teaching at Ghor University in central Afghanistan and getting a master's degree at the University of Putra in Malaysia.

Before coming to Hong Kong, I was living with my parents, my three sisters, and three brothers in a house that my father bought in 2013. At that time, with the presence of NATO forces in Afghanistan, people's businesses were good and many foreign organizations were working in Afghanistan.

My father bought a three-story house for his four children so that they could live in this house after marriage. My two brothers are now married and have several children, now, 14 people are living together in this house.

In Afghanistan, people usually live in large multi-story houses to accommodate multi-generation households. Even low-income families live in such spacious houses, which really contrast Hong Kong's living situation.



Safiullah Ahmadzai's house in Herat, Afghanistan.



Inside of Safiullah Ahmadzai's house in Herat, Afghanistan.



Safiullah room in Hong Kong.

Map of Afghanistan with thirty-four provinces. ▼



This is a type of mud house that Tahera might have grown up in.

It is usually customary for sons to live with their parents for a long time after marriage. For this reason, people buy a house for their children and future grandchildren.

Although I have a safe life and a lot of freedom in Hong Kong, having a tiny space is a challenge. I recall my spacious house and big room in Afghanistan almost every night when I lie down. My feet touch the wardrobe and I feel uncomfortable because my room is too small and the bed and wardrobe hardly fit in my 64 square feet dorm.

Tahira, who has spent most of her life in the countryside and large mud houses, says that although in Hong Kong she has security and rights that women do not have in Afghanistan, she prefers the lifestyle back home.

"Sometimes my tiny apartment in Hong Kong makes me disappointed and I wish I didn't come here. I miss living in a large mud house in my village," she said.

Tahira belongs to a low-income family. Her family relies on her father's income from farming in Daikundi province in the center of Afghanistan.

Tahira's father has rented a house in the center of Daikundi province so that his children can have access to education.



Tahera Hashimi in Hong Kong.

REVIEW: COFFEE + LAUNDROMAT

Dirty Laundry, Fresh Coffee ——— By Daoli ZHANG

Waiting for laundry to get clean can be tedious. Here are two local companies that created a mini cafe in the laundromat. You can plan a coffee date with friends while waiting for your laundry to be washed and dried.



1. Coffee & Laundry

Shop F, G/F, 1 Queen Street, Sheung Wan

If you're in the mood for a vintage vibe, Sheung Wan's Coffee & Laundry oozes cute and quirky decorations. Despite its small size, the store's old wooden entrance and panda mascot catch your eye immediately. The panda theme follows into the store, as panda stickers cover the self-service machines. Customers can easily start their load with the tap of their Octopus card. A long strip of seats surround the front of the store, while some quieter seats fall in the back to allow patrons to enjoy a cup of coffee during their wait.



"I love the warm, modern feel of the place," said Amanda, who came in to order a cup of coffee. "It brings the concept of slow living into this fast-moving city."

When ordering coffee here, Queen's Coffee is a must-try, featuring fresh orange and lemon juice infused in espresso for a rejuvenating and slightly sweet taste. The Panda Latte, made with natural milk and sesame, is also another popular choice.

Coffee & Laundry's has retro Japanese posters and magazines, old electric fans, and black and white flooring. The decor immediately transports you to a bygone era and encourages you to slow down and enjoy the moment.



2. Clean

G/F, 100 Queen's Road West, Western District

Clean is hard to miss with its yellow checkered brick walls contrasting beautifully with the old neighborhood. You are immediately welcomed by its bright and airy space. The shop maximizes its indoor and outside spaces with specially-designed steps and cafe tables.

Sustainability and veganism are at the forefront of Clean's philosophy. The store charges extra for milk and take-out packaging, serving oat milk as the default option for coffee. In addition, the store develops and sells laundry products that support sustainable living, including hypoallergenic, natural, and non-harmful laundry detergent strips. You can use Octopus, Alipay, or WeChat for payment.

While waiting for your laundry, you can indulge in their range of vegan food and drinks, including their signature oat milk latte. For a gourmet drink, try cascara, a tangy tea made from coffee peels.

"Maybe it's difficult to promote the idea of sustainable living like it is to promote oat milk, and our new store in Tsim Sha Tsui isn't doing very well right now actually," said Cynthia, the owner. "But it's really something I want to do to contribute to the community."



If you're looking to start a sustainable lifestyle and make a positive impact on our community and planet, Clean is the perfect spot to start.

REVIEW: SECOND-HAND BOOKSTORES

Cozy places to browse books ——— By Qianyu ZHAO

How long has it been since you read a paper book in peace and quiet?

There are still many brick-and-mortar bookstores that offer people a choice to slow down. Second-hand bookstores go beyond that. Each physical copy also has a history that can be seen in the yellowed paper, old folds and trifling notes.



1. Lily Bookshop

Room F-G, 1/F, Kai Fung Mansion, 189-205 Queen's Road

Harry Potter fans assemble!

Lily Bookshop is absolutely a haven for English books. Although it only consists of just a few tiny rooms, you can find books of all kinds priced at around HK\$30-300. According to the owner, many out-of-print books can also be found here too.

For Harry Potter fans, there are various versions of the novels and special-edition CDs for purchase. This is definitely the place you want to go to visit Hogwarts.

Lily Wong, the bookstore owner, said, "Shopping in a bookstore requires you to slow your mind down. It's not that you are looking for the book, but the book is looking for you."



Harry Potter novels and CDs in the Lily Bookshop.

2. Sam Kee Book Company

G/F, No.19, King's Centre, North Point, 193 King's Road

Five kittens here are looking forward to mingle

Sam Kee Book Company consists of two rooms with narrow aisles filled with historic Chinese literature - Tang poetry, song lyric poetry, martial arts novels, and etc. From Eileen Chang to Lu Xun, from Gu Long to Jin Yong, this bookstore is the best place to learn about Chinese history.

Unlike other bookstores, the owner decides the price so there are no price tags on the books. Don't worry, the owner is a very welcoming person! Also, don't miss the HK\$5 discounted books at the door. The atmosphere may be quiet, but the store's kittens bring a lot of life to your visit.



The sign in front of the Sam Kee Book Company is very visible.

3. Book & Co.

10 Park Road, Mid-Levels

Flipping paper, whiffing coffee, relaxing piano music, warm lights, and comfortable seats... Choose a sunny weekend afternoon to have a latte here and enjoy the cosiness of Book & Co

Books here have no obvious category, so it is the perfect place for wandering aimlessly. Still, if the array of books overwhelms you, you can start with the shelf by the door dedicated to Penguin Group Bestsellers and work your way to the back. You can also pick up some English DVD movies and classical music CDs for only HK\$10.

Book & Co. has five tables for readers to read and dine. They offer coffee, tea, and light meals for around HK\$50.



The sunlight pours in through the window of Book & Co.

5. My Book Room

79 Lai Chi Kok Rd, Prince Edward

For literature and history lovers

My Book Room mainly has books covering literature, history, and political science. There are three branches of this bookstore, which are all located on Kowloon Island. One owner has filled their space with high stacks of books, leaving extremely narrow aisles for passage. This might not be the most suitable place for those who want to sit down and read.

The space might seem messy, but the owner has thoughtfully divided the Chinese books into 13 sections from A-M, English books by categories, and children's books on its own to help you locate your choice of book faster. There are no price tags. The owner determines the price based on quality and thickness.



The centre of the Spirit Book Store is filled with English books, surrounded by Chinese books.



The stairs leading to the second floor are stacked with books, making the place even more crowded.

4. Spirit Book Store

Shop 7, G/F, Kin Yip Mansion, 24 Java Road, North Point

Chinese books, Anime DVDs, Magazines

The Spirit Book Store was established in 1958 and sells mainly second-hand Chinese books. The shop owners believe that second-hand book shopping is the best way to protect our environment.

On the shelves at the entrance of the bookstore, you can find a variety of DVDs, including Hong Kong police procedural films, Japanese anime, and world classics, each costing only HK\$10. The two large tables in the middle of the bookstore are stacked with English books, mainly fiction, most of which are quite new and generally priced between HK\$20-40. The rest of the shelves are filled with Chinese books: history, literature, fitness, magazines, and etc.

Notably, there is a shelf dedicated to antique Chinese books, mainly Chinese literature and Chinese history. Their pages are yellowed and many are wrapped in plastic film. If you are a fan of Chinese literature, why not come here and buy a copy of "The Records of the Grand Historian" and let the wrinkled pages tell the story? ●



Source: AI Generated by Midjourney.

“I hope to see a future Hong Kong that is like a metaverse, more futuristic. I hope it will also have a more multicultural community where people feel free to exchange new ideas.”

Five Hongkongers share their hopes for the city one century from now. Here is what A.I. imagined for them.

At the snap of a finger, the present is the past. Momentary perceptions fade into memory. The future, at its essence, is a forever imagination. Hong Kong, similar to time, is transient in nature. Rush hour sets the pace of the day, the peeling paint on buildings will eventually be replaced with reflecting glass facades. This week, you may find your local bakery closed down. In the next, a media frenzy could

surround the removal of another neon sign. Biting your tongue, you wish you had taken just one more photo.

Admittedly, we have no idea what the future truly holds. Despite this uncertainty, we still dare to dream. Think about it for a moment. How do you **feel** about the future? What do you **hope** Hong Kong will look like a century from now?

I asked five people with different occupations in Hong Kong to reflect on these very questions.



“ *Hermia Chan, 22,
Youth Climate Activist*

I hope to see a future Hong Kong with 100%

Renewable Energy

Offshore wind power will be a reality, at least 30% of our oceans will be protected. Companies will be prioritising the planet over profit.”



“ *Colleen Chiu-Shee, 38,
HKU Urban Planning Professor*

I hope to see a future Hong Kong with more

Green Spaces

that can foster more social cohesion, such as in-field pocket parks. There are a lot of transient spaces, but not much that are open to the public where you can just slow down and enjoy.



From opinions on Hong Kong’s oceans and green spaces to education and business, what all these individuals found difficult was truly describing how their wants for the future could actually look. To bring their visions to life, I turned to Midjourney, an A.I. software that transforms text prompts into detailed images. Key words were extracted from interviewees’ responses and fed through a machine learning algorithm. In less than a minute, five pictures of a future Hong Kong were generated. The image deemed most representative of each participants’ view is displayed here.

In reality, the process of using Midjourney consisted of a lot of trial-and-error. Over 150 sets of artificial intelligence generated images were produced. Beyond fuzzy details and odd depictions of fish flying in the sky, the A.I. also showed moments of bias and assumption. For example, words such as ‘multiculturalism’ favoured one ethnicity over another. ‘Futuristic’ leaned towards dystopian unless instructed otherwise. While there is little transparency on where Midjourney gathers its visual references and how it stitches them together, I can only reflect on what these interpretations, as with what interviewees shared with me, reveal about present ideas on space, life and community. In a similar fashion, these images, while inspired by the thoughts of others, ultimately also contain a sliver of my own views as I modified text prompts to evade the A.I.’s misgivings and selected the final images.

You too, dear reader, may find yourself imagining a very different future from what is represented here. So, what figment of the future do you see? What values are you carrying with you into tomorrow? What stories do you hope are told?



“ *Matthew Wong, 40,
Creative Entrepreneur*

I hope to see a future Hong Kong with a transformed

Education System

that promotes non-traditional thought. Children will be able to explore and dream about what is possible in the creative industry rather than being pressured into career paths like law or medicine.



“ *Stef Chen, 26,
Corporate Lawyer*

I hope to see Hong Kong still thriving as an international business hub. Maybe there will be

Flying Cars

by then, who knows?

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