

# Homegrown Heroes

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.

Though Dickens published that line exactly 150 years ago, it could not be more appropriate today. What was originally thought to be only a US mortgage crisis a year ago has deepened into a global economic recession – or depression, depending on whom you talk to. Flashy real estate ventures in Dubai and, closer to home, Macau, have crashed and burned, taking down bankers, developers, designers and tradespeople in their wake. Hong Kong has had its share of woes, with runs on banks and the Lehman Brothers mini-bonds collapse not so distant memories. Yet, local interior designers and architects, usually the first group of professionals to be affected during economic downturns, are resiliently optimistic. Firms small and large are not only surviving, but are doing interesting, challenging projects. Here in China and further abroad, there are still clients willing to take risks with Hong Kong talent. Which is the reality: the Hong Kong of doom and gloom splashed over nightly newscasts, or the Hong Kong where creativity flourishes and things are actually pretty good? Is this really a tale of two cities?

**While China has slowed down for us, Hong Kong has picked up.**  
*Virginia Lung, One Plus Partnership*

**We see this as an opportunity to equip ourselves for the coming challenges.**  
*Joey Ho, Joey Ho Design*

**During the last two years, the work was more than average. Now we are back to normal.**  
*Hannah Lee, Team HC*

Size is one of the most obvious indicators of success. Size matters – it reassures clients that a firm has sufficient manpower to handle large projects; it means a firm is solvent enough to afford additional salaries, and it shows that a firm has been expanding as a result of an ever-increasing workload. While Steve Leung stands out as one of the largest at 270-strong, many Hong Kong companies hover at 10 to 30 people on staff. Some make a conscious attempt at keeping their office under 10 people, to retain a studio-like, hands-on environment. Keeping a leaner, meaner team also allows firms to ride out economic waves that tend to do more obvious damage to larger practices.

“We have enough work to sustain the office,” says Anderson Lee of Index Architecture. “Clients are beginning to realise that we don’t do cookie-cutter design. We have become more focussed. But there have been no major changes for us, no major shifts in architectural thinking. We are still small but we have grown from just me and an assistant to seven people.”

Shirley Chang of Chang Bene agrees that size is not an indicator of good work. “We can survive during downtimes because our office is kept small and we just need a couple of interesting projects at any given time,” she explains. “Clients from firms big and small come to us and they have no concern whatsoever about how many people we have on staff – they just care about what we can do and whether we can deliver.”

Indeed, as this year’s Pritzker Prize winner Peter Zumthor demonstrates, small studios have the advantage of being able to do niche work. If they do it well, they don’t need to be bothered by the necessary yet mind-numbing bread-and-butter jobs that most of their competitors have to churn out. And all the firms that we

profiled categorically stated that downsizing wasn’t required as a result of the downturn – perhaps the best indicator that things are not as gloomy as they seem. Many, in fact, are welcoming the slowdown as a chance for them to catch their breath, work on streamlining things internally, or simply to take stock and see where they want to go next.

“When we started 10 years ago, we were focussed mainly on private residences,” recalls Ed Ng of AB Concept. “Since then, we have moved on to hospitality projects. Today, more than 80 percent of the work that we do is on five-star properties for international operators in different countries. We have moved into new markets to further diversify our studio, and are now providing architectural design services.”

**We have matured and wised up.** *William Lim, CL3*

“It’s status quo for us,” says William Lim of CL3. “We are staying focussed. It is a good time to strengthen up our setup internally, which when the market was strong, we had no time for.”

“The way we do things now is different,” notes Virginia Lung of One Plus Partnership. “We toast each new year by examining our goals for that year. We did a lot of showflats at first but we like doing different types of projects. We are now doing clubhouses and theatres – there is more variety. Each time, we try to incorporate different cultural elements into the design. Yes, we are affected by the downturn; some projects have been put on hold, for example. While 80 percent of our work used to be in China, it is now down to 40 percent. But at the same time, our work in Hong Kong has risen from 20 percent to 60 percent.”

**It has been proven that consistent high quality work is the best strategy during crisis**  
*Ed Ng, AB Concept*

While Hong Kong firms are striving to push forward creative ideas, they are also practising more sustainable design. For many, green is no longer an option – it is the only way to design. This, coming from a city known for its rampant mass consumption, speaks volumes for the city’s designers.

**There is no instant fame and fortune in architecture. It is not Andy Warhol.**  
*Anderson Lee, Index Architecture*

“We have created a workshop to experiment with designs,” explains Hannah Lee of Team HC. “We have a more refined approach when we design and execute projects. We are looking into solar energy, more organic usage of materials in their raw state, and environment-friendly and recycled materials when we select finishes.”

“We believe as a designer our role is to create a living environment, and sustainability is essential,” says Joey Ho of Joey Ho Design. “We are collecting new knowledge and, in return, we will educate our clients and persuade them to adopt those new applications.”

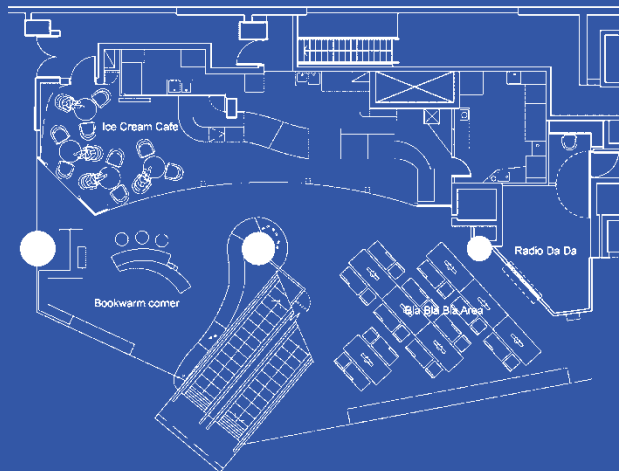
“Right now, we are using local materials as much as we can, instead of having things flown in or shipped from overseas,” says Chang. “There are so many low-tech ways to respond to environmental issues. For example, just in the way one sites a house, provides adequate sun shading and natural ventilation. It is amazing how much air-conditioning cost can be saved when these simple ideas are taken into consideration.”

Indeed, it seems that when the going gets tough, the hard-working firms in Hong Kong are digging in their heels and finding opportunities within these challenging times. Judging by their recently completed projects, the homegrown design heroes of this city are steaming full speed ahead. Take a look and judge for yourselves.

# SLOWLY by da dolce

Joey Ho Design

Photography by Graham Uden and Ray Lau



Langham Place is a vertical retail shopping mall that reflects the buzz of Mongkok, with a bevy of trendy shops catering to a teen and young adult market. In keeping with its target audience, Italian gelato brand da dolce decided to open its first Hong Kong shop on the Basement 2 level, with interiors courtesy of Joey Ho Design. Set within an atrium space punctured by crisscrossing escalators, it draws curious shoppers from the floors above who wonder just what's going on down there. Even the escalators leading to SLOWLY are branded to be in keeping with the rest of the space, and feature colourfully whimsical graphics that allude to the retro-contemporary café.

SLOWLY by da dolce is much more than a gelato bar. Naturally, the dozens of gelato flavours housed along a gently curving row of transparent freezers puts the sweet treat at centre stage. Yet it also offers a café, which dishes up pastas and savoury snacks, a Basheer bookshop and its own radio station dubbed Dada, with retro sets and speakers on every table. Feature walls and table lamps share the same funky graphics that adorn the escalators, and hint at a Japanese anime influence. They offset the white background and curvilinear edges on the custom furnishings. Open and fluid within a retail setting, SLOWLY allows customers to meander in and out seamlessly while shopping or after a movie to browse the latest issue of, dare we say, *hinge*, while enjoying a bite. Ho deliberately plays up simple geometric shapes and a clean background to provide a platform for tasting life – in a leisurely manner, of course.



**Company Name:** Joey Ho Design Ltd

**Director:** Joey Ho

**Date established:** 2005

**Total number of staff:** 15

**Contact details:** Room 1601-1602, Car Po Commercial Building, 18-20 Lyndhurst Terrace, Central, Hong Kong.  
Tel: +852 2850 8732, [www.joeyhodesign.com](http://www.joeyhodesign.com)

**Notable projects:** Lifestyle Library, Singapore; Living Pod residence, Hong Kong, Thousand Island Lake Golf Club, Hangzhou

**Projects in the pipeline:** private house in Singapore (his first architectural design project), clubhouse in mainland China, sales gallery in Hangzhou

**Most recent honour:** Best 100 in JCD Awards 2008, Japan, for Open

**Design hero:** Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin Group

**Inspiration:** "Information + interaction = inspiration"

**Worst thing about practising in Hong Kong:** "Rich people with bad taste"

**Around your office:** "We don't allow shoes inside, only slippers or bare feet"

# Ha Residence

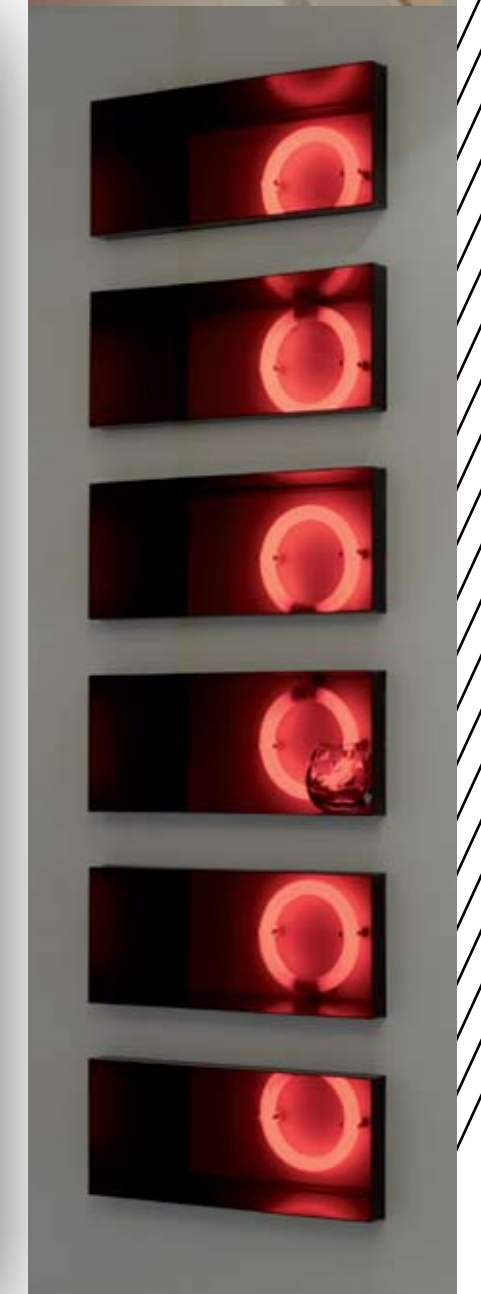
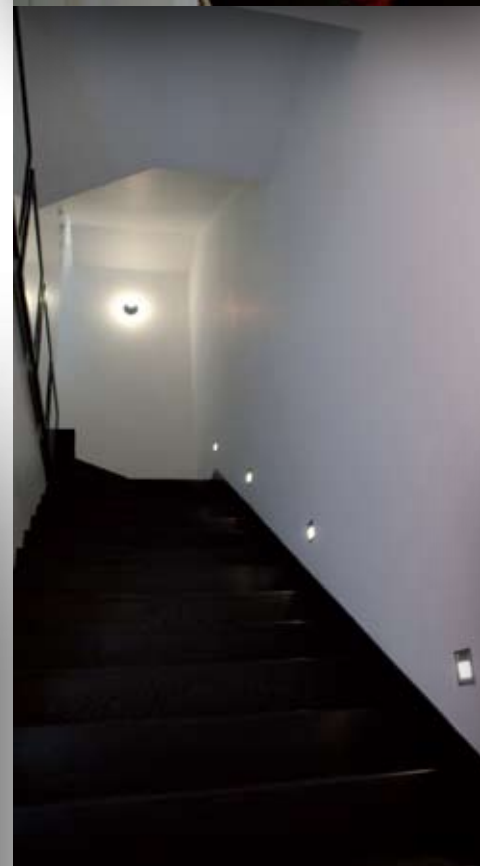
Index  
Architecture

Photography by Francis Chen

Situated in The Giverny, Sai Kung, this long and narrow townhouse is the home of a family of five: a couple, their daughter and twin sons. One of the main challenges Index faced was the client's request for a home-office in the middle of the space, so that both parents could work while watching over their kids as they played. In addition, the owners are both in fashion: she runs a fashion brand while he is in textiles. Over the years, they have amassed a substantial modern art collection and they wanted their home to showcase their treasures.

"That was how we came up with the red cube in the middle of the ground floor, to help divide up the space," notes Anderson Lee, founder and principal of Index Architecture. "It is against a backdrop of white with feature walls here and there." Not only does the floating box help to define the living and dining areas, it becomes an anchor for the entire floor. The cube is finished with slick red car paint and foam aluminium panels, with strategic cutouts to visually connect the owners to both ends of the house. Directly across is an oversized 3-by-1.5-metre sliding blackboard that allows everyone to leave messages or sketch, while also doubling as a door for a restroom.

While the client already had a number of modern classic furniture pieces, Index supplemented them with customised fixtures and even some artwork. On the ground floor, a lighting and shelving unit – once again demonstrating Lee's fascination with multifunctional furnishings – was inspired by lighting artist Dan Flavin and is made from flexi glass and coloured fluorescent tubes. Different areas are highlighted with strong colours and patterns, such as a Macintosh-esque shelf and screen. The result is a modern gallery that also works well as a playground for young children.



**Company Name:** Index Architecture Ltd

**Date established:** 2000

**Director:** Anderson Lee

**Total number of staff:** 7

**Contact details:** 19/F Yen Yee Commercial Building, 322 Des Voeux Road West, Hong Kong. Tel: 2155 1007, www.indexarchitecture.com

**Notable projects:** V Serviced Apartments, Causeway Bay, Ztampz Fashion Boutique, Causeway Bay, Exploratory Science Museum, Campinas, Brazil

**Projects in the pipeline:** private villa, Xinhui, PRC; private studio gallery, Shunde, PRC

**Most recent honours:** Citation Award, American Institute of Architects, Northwest and Pacific Region

**Favourite architectural icon:** Covent Sainte Marie de La Tourette, Lyon, France

**Inspiration:** "People and street watching"

**Best and worst thing about practising in Hong Kong:** "Density! It is a double-sided coin where the living density here allows for interpretive ways to explore collective living and habitation. At the same time, this density also leads to the homogeneity of building typologies!"

# Moët & Chandon Bar

## Marc & Chantal

Welcome to a world of Champagne! If chandeliers, seats and bars had to represent the bubbly liqueur, this is what they would look like. Every detail of Marc & Chantal's Moët & Chandon bar at the Four Seasons in Macau evokes the branded Champagne.

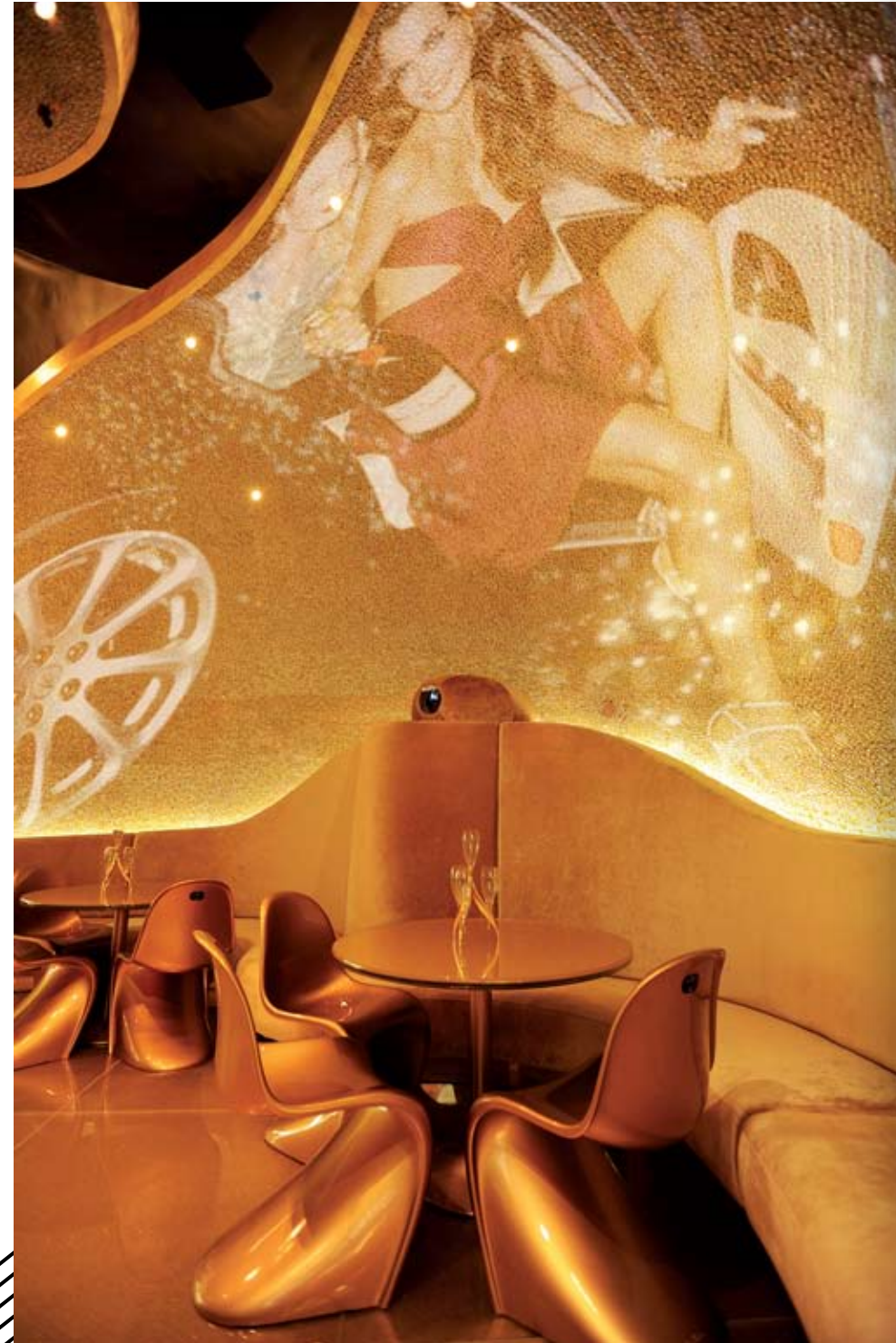
The bar is an island of gold in the hotel's Shoppes hall – a venue dedicated to celebrations. At the entrance, a large Moët & Chandon pediment greets visitors. The gold-and-diamond crisscross-textured wall was designed after the motif on the packaging and the foil on the neck of a Moët & Chandon.

Inside, it's an explosion of gold. The precious colour is everywhere – on stools, bars, banquette cushions and on the ceiling. But the biggest gold feature is a round structure standing at the back of the bar and representing a gigantic Champagne bubble.

Acting as a sculptural centrepiece as well as a multimedia component and VIP area, the round structure is the bar's focal point. The droll bubble is covered by 18-carat gold foil on the outside and by glass pebbles hand-fixed over a gold glittery surface inside. The multi-sensorial structure includes interactive projections of bubbles rising amid advertisement images for Moët & Chandon. Inside, Marc & Chantal created a warm and coy atmosphere with curvaceous golden chairs, comfy banquettes and small round tables. Centerpieces made of twisted and entangled Champagne glasses adorn each table and add a touch of romance.

At the other end of the bar, two chandeliers attract the visitor's eye. The first one is perched over the central bar and takes the shape of rising bubbles and the second one, hanging over the side bar, comprises 700 acrylic tubes enclosing a multitude of tiny bubbles.

After a lucky hand at one of Macau's casinos, there is no better place to go. Cheers!



**Company Name:** Marc & Chantal Design

**Date established:** 1993

**Directors:** Marc Brulhart (Marc B), Marc Cansier (Marc C), Chantal Rechaussat

**Total number of staff:** 30

**Contact details:** Rm 401, 4/F, Arion Commercial Centre, 2-12 Queen's Road West, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong  
Tel: +852 25437744, www.marc-chantal.com

**Notable projects:** Brand identity for the Opposite House Hotel in Beijing and a tableware collection for Hermès called "Les Poèmes du Mandarin"

**Projects in the pipeline:** An experience centre in Malaysia, branding for a hotel in Hong Kong, a show suite for a development in Beijing.

**Most recent honour or accolade:** "The tableware collection we designed for Hermès is one of Christian Liaigre's "hot picks" for 2009"

**Favourite architectural icon:** The Eiffel Tower

**Design hero:** "We don't need heroes!"

**What do you do for inspiration?**

Chantal: "Listen to my 6 year old"  
Marc B: "Watch life go by with eyes open wide"  
Marc C: "Nice chilled Pinot Grigio..."

**Most cherished designer object/gadget?**

Chantal: "A Chico Bicalho freaky wind-up robot insect...it hasn't yet cured my phobia of spiders though!"  
Marc B: "My limited edition Gaetano Pesce pencil holder"  
Marc C: "My Bose QuietComfort® 2 Acoustic Noise Cancelling® headphones... for air travel bliss"

**Around your office, is it suit and tie or jeans and t-shirt or ...?**

"No discrimination, either of these works. Swimsuit on Fridays is perfectly OK, too"



# Tian Block 5 Show Flat

## One Plus Partnership

The promise of luxury and joy couldn't be stated here more clearly. One Plus lays it all down in black and white in a monochromatic sweep to keep things rich, pure and simple. Bold stripes take confident strides across the space, starting from the floor, leaving a defiant trail on the walls and fixtures. The concept is well executed through a subtle mix of marble flooring, lush carpet and bespoke furnishings. The designer duo leave no area unconquered as they take on the ceiling, using this unique design scheme to create a black custom-made light fixture which descends like a black grille over the dining table.

Just when things were starting to get a little bit bleak, the designers jazz things up by adding tones of gold to the furniture and fixtures, even contrasting it with silver stainless steel in a truly glamorous twist. That luxury starts creeping into the master bedroom and bath areas in the form of a gold stainless steel wall finishing, warm beige rugs and golden backlighting. What we experience now is a shift, where different design elements start to flow, adding a lighter (and warmer) touch to a dark and arguably prosaic colour scheme, yet maintaining the form and shape of this distinct and striking design initiative.



**Company name:** One Plus Partnership Limited

**Date established:** May 2004

**Directors:** Virginia Lung and Ajax Law Ling Kit

**Total number of staff:** 12

**Contact details:** 9/F, New Wing, 101 King's Road, North Point.  
Tel: +852 2591 9308, [www.onepluspartnership.com](http://www.onepluspartnership.com)

**Notable projects:** Bamboo lobby at Shenzhen Mellon Town Tower 11 Residential Lobby, Mellon Town Club House, Chengdu sales office

**Projects in the pipeline:** Movie theatre, clubhouse

**Most recent honour or accolade:** 2008 SEG (Society for Environmental Graphic Design) Design Award (USA) - Jury Award (Shenzhen Mellon Town Tower 11 Residential Lobby)

**Design hero:** Zaha Hadid

**What do you do for inspiration?** "Travel, read, watch movies"

**Best and worst thing about practising in Hong Kong?**  
"Best: Open minded to the international world of design; worst: landless"

**Most cherished designer object/gadget:** Mac Air

# Fairwood Café Generation II

## Steve Leung

Photography by Ulso Tsang

A few years ago, Steve Leung, Alan Chan and Yasumichi Morita worked to re-brand the Chinese fastfood chain Fairwood Cafe. Together they came up with a bright orange colour code and a cheerful, casual ambience for the restaurants' interiors. Thinking of denim as their design theme, the team used orange vinyl – a denim imitation – as main material adding playful pockets, zippers, buttons and belt loops to the furniture. But denim is now out of fashion and Fairwood management decided it was time for a new look.

Working by himself this time, Steve Leung conceived a modern and sculptural interior for Fairwood's second generation of restaurants. He kept the company's branding elements – the orange key colour and the jumping-jack logo – but managed to create a much sleeker version of the interiors.

Walls, ceilings and entrance counter are still bright orange, maintaining the restaurants' cheerful glow, but this time Leung used cream and white furniture to soften the overall look and give the restaurants a more graceful ambience. Tables and banquets all have rounded edges, which also echo the logo's curves.

In the new decor, the famous jumping-jack becomes part of the design. His outline shapes the ceiling and it seems that his huge arms and legs are embracing patrons eating below. The happy chap is also carved in layered relief on the wavy walls, which breaks with the regular pattern. And in more subtle details, his upside-down shape is outlined on black lampshades.

Leung took full advantage of the 3,300sq ft area of the new Fairwood prototype and managed to fit in numerous seats without jamming up the passageway. The combination of a relatively high ceiling, large alleys and open spaces prevent patrons from having that oppressive feeling common to most fastfood restaurants. Sweethearts even have their own intimate corner with double seats by the windows.



**Company name:** Steve Leung Designers Ltd

**Date established:** 1997

**Director:** Steve Leung

**Total number of staff:** Around 270

**Contact details:**  
30/F, Manhattan Place, 23 Wang Tai Road, Kowloon Bay, KLN, Hong Kong  
Tel: + 852 2527 1600, www.steveleung.com

**Notable projects:** Symphony Bay Showflat (his first interior design project); Mission Hills (Shenzhen); Hyatt Regency Hong Kong, Shatin (his latest completed hotel project)

**Projects in the pipeline:**  
Resort Hotel in Huangshan, China, Chinese Restaurant at W Hotel Guangzhou, China, Shama Luxe in Chengdu and Dalian, China

**Most recent honour or accolade:**  
The Andrew Martin International Awards, 2009

**Favourite architectural icon:**  
Le Corbusier

**Design hero:** I M Pei

**Most cherished designer object/gadget:** i-phone

**Around your office, is it suit and tie or jeans and t-shirt or ...?**  
"It's a mix of styles, the staff's own style, rather casual indeed"

# Florient Rise Showcase & Sales Office

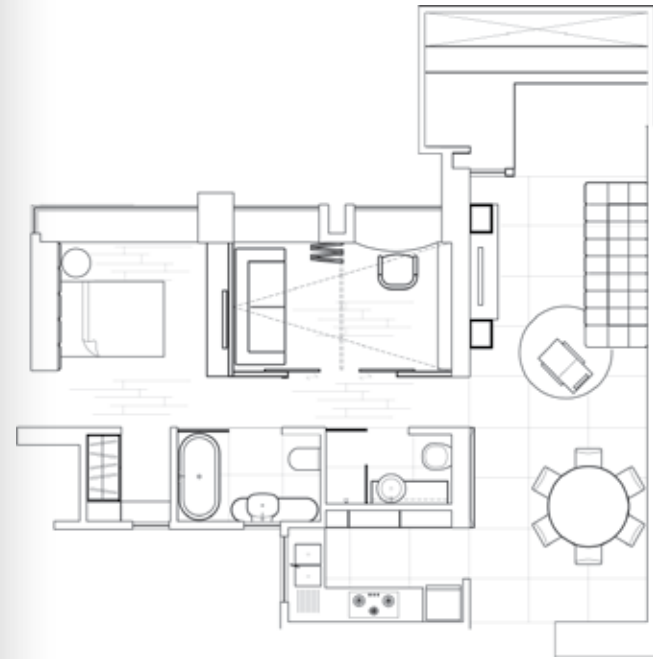
## Jason + Caroline Design

Photography by John Butlin

At times the fantasy of having your own home can be somewhat elusive. And in a saturated yet expensive property market like Hong Kong, the fantasy often remains just that. It also means the Sunday family trips to showflats have never been more important. For design duo Jason and Caroline, the challenge was to pitch a lifestyle to become the stuff that dreams are made of, for both buyer and clients Nan Fung Group and the Urban Renewal Authority.

Florient Rise starts off as a whimsical ride. Jason and Caroline looked to the forces of nature to design an elegant and subtle spatial experience using a combination of textured materials, motifs, video images, music and lighting. It begins with the discovery of a red cocoon in the middle of an abstract forest made of aluminium pipes and mirror attached to the ceiling like icicles in a cave. Visitors are then ushered into four different life-size showflats, all examples of modern living that pare life back to its bare necessities – pressure- and clutter-free environments where each different form, texture and colour is inspired by the simplicity of nature, then enhanced by a selection of sophisticated pieces of designer furniture. Each flat has an abstract man-made landscape attached, connecting all four spaces that encourage interaction. A 20m-long wall filled with Vitra Algae and more than 3,000 pieces of hanging crystal strips create a striking impact as one enters the Zen garden floor. Here, visitors get to experience nature within four walls in a powerful sensory display.

As the intensity starts to wane visitors are led into a tunnel of relaxation before they hit the Sales Hall. And if they're still in a dream-like state after their journey, it is with high hopes they will turn that dream into a reality.



**Company name:** Jason Caroline Design Ltd

**Date established:** 2001

**Directors:** Jason Yung and Caroline Ma

**Total number of staff:** 6

**Contact details:** 1401, 39 Wellington Street, Central.  
Tel: +852 25177510, [www.jasoncarolinedesign.com](http://www.jasoncarolinedesign.com)

**Notable projects:** Spa as Home, Maxim City Hall, W Café

**Projects in the pipeline:** Ten other luxury residential projects

**What do you do for inspiration?** Everyday life/people, ie playing with the kids, tennis, shopping, reading seasonal fashion catalogues, travel, movies, TV

**Best and worst thing about practising in Hong Kong:** "Best thing about practising in HK is that it is relatively easier to start with your own practice and quite a lot of opportunities to have good budget interior project. However, there is no small / medium scale architectural project here for small practice"

**Most cherished designer object/gadget:** "i-phone, it changes the world"

**Around your office, is it suit and tie or jeans and t-shirt or ...?** Depends what's happening before or after work



# China Resources Land Art Pavilion

Photography by Hu Wen Kit

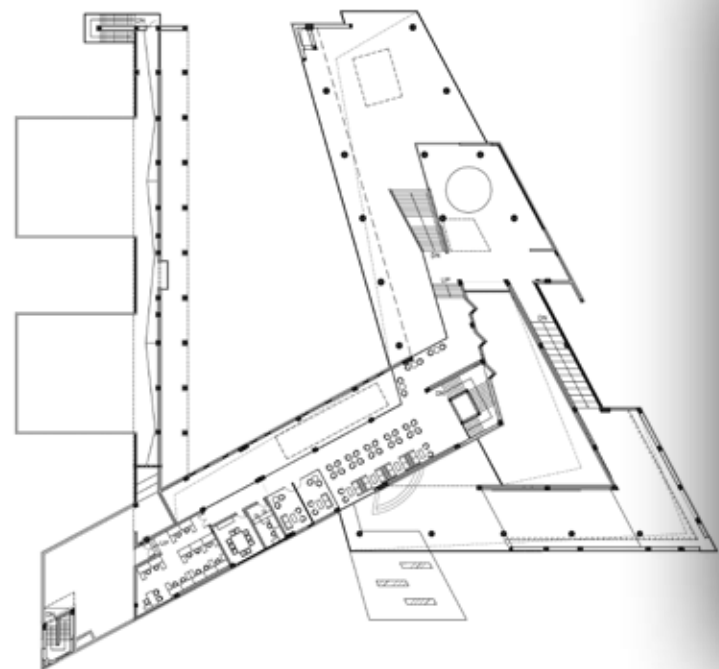
CL3

Seldom has the act of selling property been cloaked by the romance and austerity associated with a modern art museum. Normally a model of the real estate development is the focus of such an exhibition, but one wouldn't experience feelings of reverence meandering around CR Land's Art Pavilion if that were the case.

Inspired by great artists who have used lighting in their work – artists such as Dan Flavin, Michaelangelo Pistoletto, Sol LeWitt and Anish Kapoor – CL3's William Lim and Ricky Chung took on the theme 'illumination' to bridge the disciplines of architecture and art by creating the exhibits as well as the exhibition space.

Glowing against a sober palette blanketed by walnut floors, marble, cement board and black stone-tiled walls, the artworks within this 2,617sq m site don't merely play an aesthetic role. They interact with the architectural space in question, acting as foci that give a sense of place and direction to visitors. Take, for example, the verticality achieved using a single row of naked incandescent lightbulbs dangling in alternating heights, squeezed into a V-shaped wall accentuating the acute angle of the space such that the bulbs look like moths flocking to a lightsource, ultimately merging into it.

The drum or lantern-like feature echoes the shape of the reception desk, acting as a pivotal point to the lobby's plan. That soon becomes challenged by the rectangular Sol LeWitt-inspired red pergola. The piece fills a double-height void, demonstrating its uniqueness against the other installations and defending its territory. In the end each piece reinforces its right to exist, paying tribute to the seeds of inspiration from which they were born. CR Land plans to donate the Art Pavilion to the city of Chengdu.



**Company Name:** CL3 Architects Limited

**Date established:** 1993

**Director:** William Lim

**Total number of staff:** 30

**Contact details:** 7/F, Hong Kong Arts Centre, 2 Harbour Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong. Tel: +852 2527 1931, www.CL3.com

**Notable projects:** Lantern Wonderland, Hong Kong; Nishimura Restaurant, Shangri-La Hotel, Beijing; Ladders – Bamboo Installation at the Venice Biennale's International Architectural Exhibition 2006

**Projects in the pipeline:** Marina Bay Sands, Hotel Public Area, Singapore; East Hotel, Island East, Hong Kong

**Favourite architectural icon:** Guggenheim Museum, NYC by Frank Lloyd Wright

**Design hero:** Carlo Scarpa

**Best and worst thing about practising in Hong Kong?** "Best: Fast pace; worst: conservative clients"

**Most cherished designer object/gadget:** Frank Lloyd Wright Taliesin 3 Desk Lamp



# Infusion Lounge

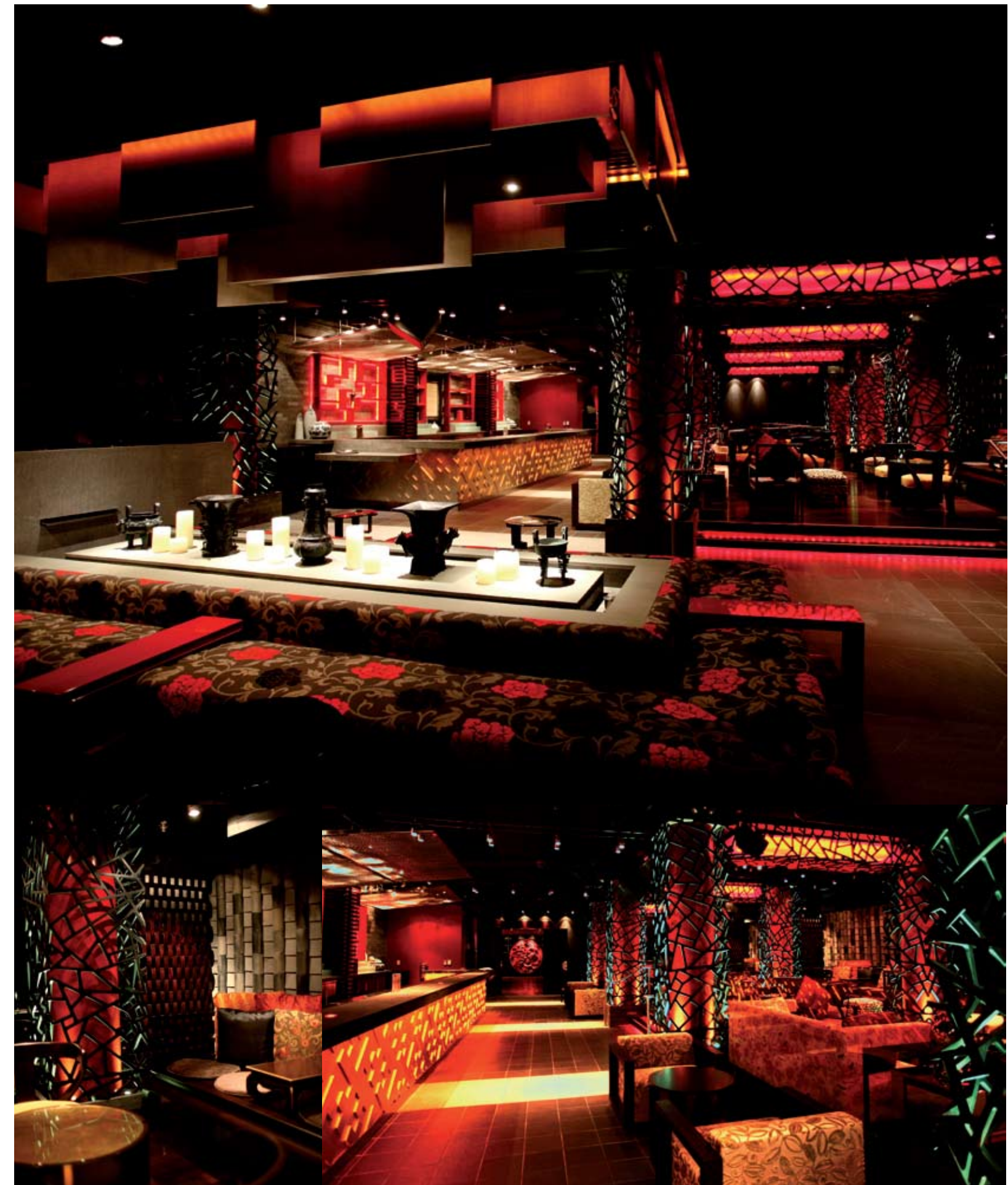
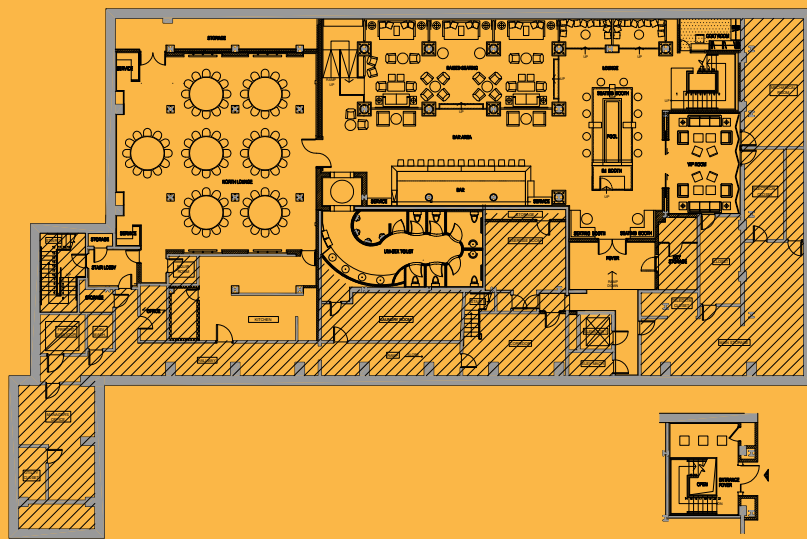
Kinney Chan & Associates

Photography by Kinney Chan

In rather stark contrast to the sobriety shown above ground at the Fusion Hotel, its hip, sub-level Infusion Lounge doesn't demonstrate quite as much restraint. On the contrary, it shows that while the day is dormant, night certainly comes to life. Split into the main social area, an elevated VIP space with five bays for daybeds and a flexible room reserved for banquets, fashion shows and the like, this 605sq m Asian-inspired bar in downtown San Francisco possesses an exotic cocktail of Chinese motifs strategically spiked with a palette of coloured LED lights for a giddy cyber vibe.

Take for example the grandeur of etched glass columns, rich fabrics, and spider-veined lattice screens that interlace with a few pieces of traditional furniture – all highlighted in a rainbow of shades. A stainless steel mesh canopy floats above the bar to create a feeling of extension and glitz when lit up.

Kinney Chan does well to dissolve typical notions of the east-west synthesis by mixing things up with a little bit of kitsch. A large, fully animated hologram sits smack bang in the centre of the bar, highlighting the humorous side of a bygone era. Add to that the elaborate auburn-black-and-gold mosaic tile curved walls of the unisex restrooms (think Ally McBeal) equipped with hi-tech hand dryers and it looks like you could be in for an interesting night... to say the very least.



**Company name:** Kinney Chan and Associates

**Date established:** 1995

**Director:** Kinney Chan

**Total number of people in office:** 25

**Contact details:** 11F, Chung Nam Bldg, 1 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong. Tel: +852 2545 1322, www.kca.com.hk

**Notable projects:** Infusion Lounge, Waldo Hotel, Absolut Icebar Shanghai

**Projects in the pipeline:** Showflats, Bar & Restaurants, Hotels, Club House, Retail projects

**Most recent honour or accolade:** The IF Communication Design Award 2009

**Design hero:** Michaelangelo

**Best and worst thing about practising in Hong Kong?** "Too commercial and too efficient"

**Most cherished designer object/gadget:** "The chair I sit on to work"

**Around your office, is it suit and tie or jeans and t-shirt or ...?** "Naked (in mind)...haha."

# Nike Sportswear Shop

## Chang Bene Design

photography courtesy of Chang Bene Design

To coincide with the launching of their new brand Nike Sportswear, Nike decided to open three flagship stores around the world: one in New York, one in Tokyo and one in Hong Kong. The first one was designed in-house at Nike's headquarters in Oregon while Wonderwall and Chang Bene were entrusted with the design of the Tokyo and Hong Kong stores, respectively.

Together with the Nike team, Shirley Chang and Christopher Bene chose the location of the new store – 1,800sq ft in an old low-rise Chinese building on Pak Sha Road, Causeway Bay. This popular shopping area around Lee Gardens is known to attract chic and hip youngsters whose thirst for the latest, trendiest outfits will never be quenched.

The design brief stated that the shop be reminiscent of sports. With this in mind, Chang Bene created a stadium-like retail space. "We set out with an image of an Olympic marathon runner holding the flame, and running alone in the concrete tunnel entry of a sports stadium (the dark space) just before he emerges at the bright open stadium (the bright space) to the exciting roar of the spectators," explains Chang. Translated into design the dark tunnel becomes a charcoal concrete front shop and the illuminated stadium, a bright interior.

Inside, Chang Bene followed up on the sports stadium theme, using wood and white laminate cabinets, industrial overhead light tubes and vertical spotlights on track with exposed wiring and custom-polished stainless steel hardware.

The furniture itself is designed to maximise the shop's fitting possibilities. The tall display wardrobes are equipped with large industrial castors while the display panels are hinged to a system of pulleys and counterweights, allowing the sales team to angle the panels in accordance with their needs. "We gave them a system," says Bene. "Let them have fun configuring it!"



**Company name:** Chang Bene Design

**Date established:** 1995

**Directors:** Shirley Chang, Christopher Bene

**Total number of staff:** varies

**Contact details:** Room 201, Yu Yuet Lai Building, 43-55 Wyndham Street, Central, Hong Kong. Tel: +852 2881 7575, [www.changbenedesign.com](http://www.changbenedesign.com)

**Notable projects:** Nike sportswear shop; Private House in Stanley (Business week/ Architectural Record China Award 2008, published in Architectural Digest); The Cultural Palace of Nationalities, East Wing, Beijing (designed, unbuilt)

**Projects on the boards:** a 5-storey building in Kowloon, a 2-storey restaurant in Wanchai and several residential projects

**Most recent honour or accolade:** Business Week/Architectural Record China Awards 2008 (US and China)

**Favourite architectural icon:** the City Hall building and courtyard in Central, Hong Kong, Peter Zumthor's Baths at Vals

**Design hero:** Peter Zumthor, Steven Holl, Zaha Hadid, Peter Marino (interiors), Calvin Tsao (interiors). "I just met a Japanese designer in London whose installation is great, his name is Daisuke Hiraiwa. And of course my brother, William Chang Suk Ping."

**What do you do for inspiration?** "Firstly, leaving the office helps. Drawing also helps a lot, especially with colour. I don't draw with the computer until I have a solution."

**Most cherished designer object/gadget:** "I really like utilitarian objects like the Swiss army knife designed anonymously. I also like all Apple computers. I like looking at those ridiculously high stilettos - how they are designed (for a foot) and how they are worn (with the weight bearing on it...). It's quite a challenge to make them look like this and be comfortable to wear."

# Tai Tam Residence

## Team HC

Many homes on the south side of Hong Kong are set on a slope to take advantage of the sea views from all levels. Team HC was commissioned to design the interiors of a three-storey 3,500sq ft house situated in Red Hill Peninsula for a couple with three young children. The home is programmed like a sandwich, with public areas for entertaining on the highest and lowest floors, and the more private bedrooms and bathrooms in between.

The top floor contains the main entrance, with a formal corridor leading up to a generous living room that boasts floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors and the South China Sea beyond. A secondary entry leads from the two-car garage into a bike storage area, a corner for the family pooch and a large dine-in kitchen with a central island. Sliding screens allow the kitchen to be completely open to the formal dining room for both areas to flow into one large space – screens are, in fact, the home's theme and used throughout for maximum flexibility. The lowest floor is an extension of the formal top floor, with a large family room, U-shaped kitchen, bathroom and generous terrace for entertaining. Along one side, an outdoor staircase leads directly up to the street level for guests to bypass the private areas entirely.

The central level is divided into two halves, with the children's playroom dominating one side. This area can be separated from the bedrooms with sliding doors, much like the bathroom in the master bedroom. Sleeping lofts for the kids add a sense of fun while making the most of the space. Wooden screens and antique furnishings echo the owners' fondness for Asian aesthetics.



**Company Name:** Team HC Ltd

**Date established:** 1998

**Directors:** Clarence Chiang Jr, Hannah Lee

**Total number of staff:** 7

**Contact details:** 1005-07 China Merchants Building, 152-155 Connaught Road, Central, Hong Kong. Tel: +852 2581 2011, www.teamhc.com

**Notable projects:** Franck Muller flagship store; Sevva; loft in downtown Los Angeles

**Projects in the pipeline:** golf and country club in China; Franck Muller boutiques in other parts of Asia; Sincere Haute Horlogerie

**Most recent honour:** Best Retail Concept awarded by the Singapore Tourism Board for Sincere Haute Horlogerie in Singapore

**Favourite architectural icon:** Notre Dame du Haut in Ronchamps

**Worst thing about practising in Hong Kong:** "Contractors' general attitude of dollars before craftsmanship."

**Most cherished designer object:** "Our parallel straightedges."

# Yin Serviced Apartments

Philip Liao  
and Partners

Most of the local designers who participated in this cover story mentioned travel as their main source of inspiration. A serviced apartment is no flat and no hotel. Somewhere in between both notions, it has to combine the comfort of a home with the efficiency and codified style of a hotel. So for one of his latest projects – the Yin Serviced Apartments – Philip Liao probably relied on his experience travelling, living and working in North America, Europe and Asia to design a ‘home away from home’, a room that is foreign yet familiar.

Located in the heart of Lan Kwai Fong, the building was once an office complex. The 21 floors now comprise 42 luxurious and contemporary studios of 740 to 862 sq ft each. The apartments’ small size allowed Liao to work with an ‘industrial chic’ theme without turning the flats into cold and impersonal spaces. He plays with strong sculptural elements and preserves a sense of cosiness with the use of a basic soft palette – mainly white and cream.

Liao conveys the industrial look mostly through his choice of material. He uses visually exposed copper water pipes for shower cubicles, timber planks for the ceilings and sections of white brick walls throughout the room.

The bathroom design is particularly interesting. Clear glass dividers with black frames isolate the bath from the rest of the room and provide a sense of privacy while retaining an overall impression of space and openness. Large bathtubs stand in the middle of the room like sculptural centerpieces, giving character to the space. Subtle details also contribute to the overall impression of elegance. Note the stone parquetry in the bath space – Japanese style.



**Company name:** Philip Liao and Partners Limited

**Date established:** 2002

**Director:** Philip Liao

**Contact details:** Room 3203-05 Sino Plaza, No. 255 Gloucester Road, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. Tel: 31623492, www.plpl.com.hk

**Notable projects:** The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (Bethanie Campus); New Entrance and Facade for the Historic Lisboa Hotel; West Kowloon Concept Masterplan

**Projects in the pipeline:** Multi-purpose theatre and conference centre for Soo Show University; boutique hotel in Tai O

**Most recent honour or accolade:** UNESCO Heritage Award

**Favourite architectural icon:** San Carlo Alle Quattro Fontane.

**Design hero:** Borromini

**What do you do for inspiration?** “Travel”

**Most cherished designer object/gadget:** “Blackberry bold, most cherished during trips.”

**Around your office, is it suit and tie or jeans and t-shirt or ...?** “No fixed code but something in between – jackets for meetings, shirt, and slacks in house.”



# Kobron

## Panorama

Photography by Ng Siu Fung

With 800 stores across China and still counting, clothing chain Kobron called upon Panorama to revamp its brand identity by plucking out and reinterpreting artistic elements within an urban landscape.

The flagship store – the first in this rebranding exercise – turned the three-level retail area into an 18,000sq ft ‘shopping-scape’ where customers can explore each collection within special zones. An information tunnel at the main entrance makes for an impressive arrival, with a variety of display options ranging from platforms and screens to cabinets and even a grid system. A palette of mild steel plate, brickwork and timber are allocated to each of the zones, demarcating the colour schemes and clothing styles which range from Trendy Casual and City Chic to the more formal Urban collection.

Stainless steel strips with LED lights mirror the fast-paced nature of urban life. The feature is a large part of shopfront window displays for all three levels and characterises the visual identity for the brand. Charcoal grey flooring mirrors the exposed black slots in the ceiling, giving an understated feel to the space. The lines and grid provide flexible display and lighting systems for the different retail precincts.

A commanding display of vertical timber screens that swivel shoot right through the centre of the three-storey store. Linking each level, the myriad panels act as lungs that provide breathing space free from retail, paving the way for a truly unique shopping experience in this urban oasis.



**Company Name:** Panorama

**Date established:** 2003

**Director:** Horace Pan

**Total number of staff:** 10

**Contact details:** Unit 7B, Charnhill Centre, No 50 Hillwood Road, TST, Hong Kong. Tel: +852 2317 7850, www.panoramahk.com

**Notable projects:** Red Box; DJS; Chinese Arts & Crafts re-branding

**Projects in the pipeline:** The Swank (completion July 09) new image of a well-established fashion label in Hong Kong; Chinese Arts & Crafts - Shenzhen Flagship Store (completion Sept 09)

**Most recent honour or accolade:** Hong Kong Ten Outstanding Designers Awards; 2 winners, IF Design Award China

**Favourite architectural icon:** Taj Mahal

**Design hero:** "My mum"

**Best and worst thing about practising in Hong Kong:** "Best: locality; worst: limited physical and mental space"

**Most cherished designer object/gadget:** Swan Chair

# HK-Macau Heliport

## Mission & Associates

Photography by Ulso Tsang

Why should all the eccentricity and fun be associated with Macau? Designers at Mission & Associates made it clear that visitors travelling between Macau and Hong Kong by helicopter wouldn't jump to that conclusion anymore. They designed an extension to Central's heliport and made the wait before the helicopter ride almost as exciting as the ride itself.

Organised around one main circular lobby, two waiting lounges and one VIP room feature comfy, velvety sofas and coffee tables. The floor is covered with a thick carpet which contributes to the luxurious atmosphere. Its geometric patterns echo the three parabolic ceiling domes and their evolving hexagonal lights. Those domes are the most surprising feature of Mission's design. Originally, the idea was to find a way to overcome the low headroom in the existing space. The design team thought of including parabolic ceiling domes and it became the design's main statement. The domes take root in a central pillar and rise in unpredictable shapes and directions, making of the crackled ceiling a powerful source of light.

The futuristic look is reinforced by the white plastic bands, which run from one counter to another and mark a virtual entrance to each dedicated space: VIP room, Lounge number 2, and so forth. The buffet counters are located in the central circular lobby and are designed in black and white to keep consistency with the rest of the room. Thus visitors are all set to indulge themselves with a helicopter ride.



**Company Name:** Mission & Associates Limited

**Date established:** 1994

**Director:** Lai Kwok Leung, Vincent

**Total number of staff:** 10 people

**Contact details:** Unit 316, InnoCentre, 72 Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon Tong, Kowloon. Tel: +852 2881 0922, [www.missionidea.com](http://www.missionidea.com)

**Notable projects:**

Swarovski Trend and Application Centre; VIP Lounge at Shun Tak Heliport, Central, Hong Kong; Beijing Aquarium interiors of exhibition areas

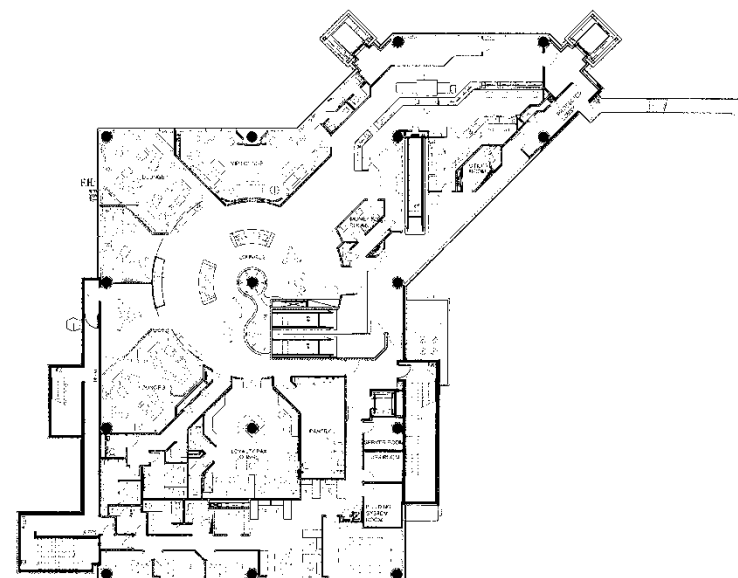
**Favourite architectural icon:** Louis Kahn

**Design hero:** Peter Zumthor

**What do you do for inspiration?** "Ideas usually come from my appreciation of both disadvantages and potential in everything, a change of viewpoint to see possibilities contained in difficulties, the ability to perceive things in one way but through multi-dimensions, and to believe that the simplest thing is always hidden with great ideas."

**Best and worst thing about practicing in Hong Kong?** "Great to be heated up, worst to be boiled."

**Most cherished designer object/gadget** Pebbles on the shore



# ECOLS

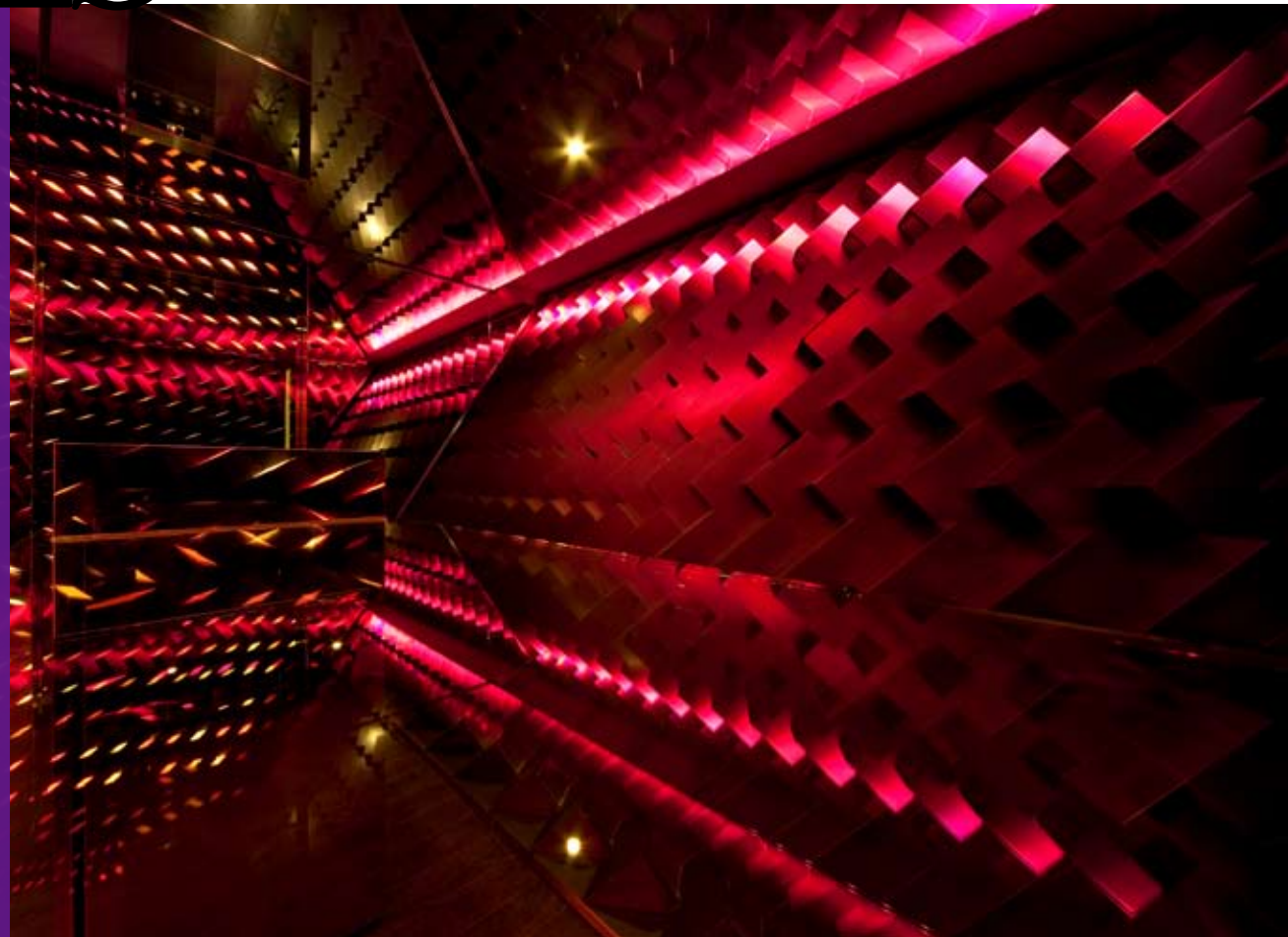
Photography by Edge Design Institute Ltd

## Edge Design Institute

ECOLS is a complete redefinition of retail space as we know it. Dedicated purely to eco-friendly designer products, the place certainly adds a je ne sais quoi quality to its sales approach.

Gary Chang saw the space as two floors stacked vertically and so created two programmes with two very different experiences. The lifestyle level takes its cue from lithographs of the great Dutch graphic artist MC Escher. Here, a series of interlocking step platforms made from recycled cement boards form product zones that do away with conventional spatial flow. The steps functionally turn into product display areas that at a macro level inadvertently double as a large art installation, its ascending and descending movement communicating a unique spatial experience that transports the shopper to the commercial level.

The shift into the commercial realm can be described as nothing short of intergalactic. The experience turns into a guided tour of thematic light shows that promote LED and other energy-saving lighting in everyday living, working and retail environments. At the beginning a serene foyer kicks off the journey into a passageway of visual light encounters. Each door is cleverly concealed, until exposure to each environment controlled by a computerised program of music and light. The White Room shows the use of an artificial skylight streamlined by a self-lit membrane wall which also demonstrates colour temperature. Among other eccentricities, Chang has also incorporated an interactive installation where the lights change into a rainbow of colours as it detects body movement. As the retail voyage comes to an end, the simulated and the real world merge at the lounge downstairs. For a moment, however, the whole retail escapade felt almost... real.



**Company Name:** EDGE Design Institute Ltd

**Date established:** 1994

**Directors:** Gary Chang and Raymond Chan

**Total number of staff:** 20

**Contact details:** Suite 1604 Eastern Harbour Centre, 28 Hoi Chak Street, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong. Tel: +852 2802 6212, [www.edge.hk.com](http://www.edge.hk.com)

**Projects on the boards:** Serviced Apartments, Hotel Lounge, Hotel and Spa Complex, Retails, Residential

**What do you do for inspiration?** "We take a very serious and professional approach to each and every project regardless of its size. Although our design outcome can be quite different with different projects, one can easily see our company's design philosophy being reflected in all of them, and these principles are Change, Choice, Connection, Co-existence."

**Around your office, is it suit and tie or jeans and t-shirt or ...?** "Jeans and T-Shirt."

# Shangri-La Far Eastern Plaza Hotel

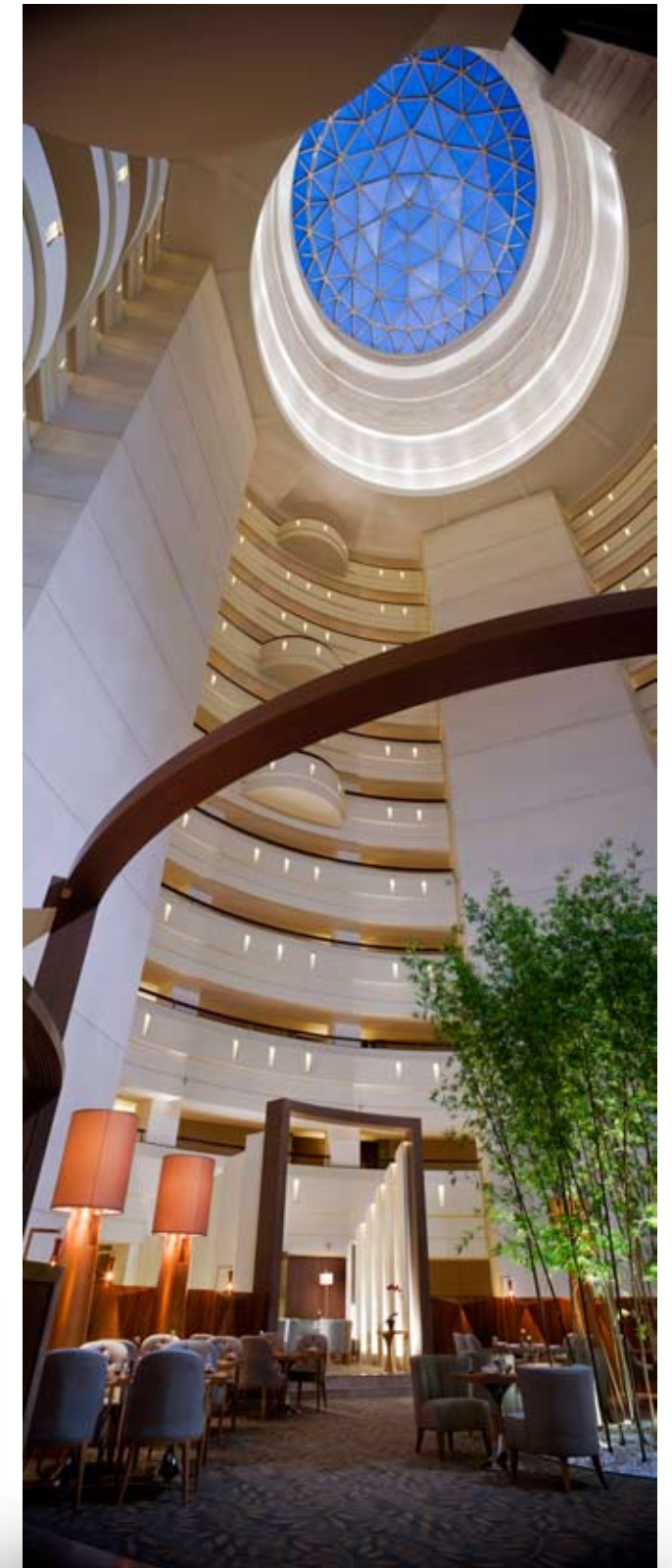
Photography by A. Chester Ong

## AB Concept

Situated in the southern part of Taiwan, Tainan is the oldest city on the island with a rich and varied history. The building that houses Shangri-La Tainan was first erected in the 1990s, but was left abandoned for over a decade despite being the tallest building in the city. When AB Concept took over the interior design of the hotel, its mandate was to transform the property into one of the most luxurious international properties in Taiwan, yet still keep a comfortable, understated aesthetic that reflected the area's people and culture.

"To make this project part of the local culture, we chose to work with a minimal variation of materials that were kept consistent throughout the project," explains Ed Ng, Director of AB Concept. "This ties it all back together into a cohesive whole." To pack an immediate punch into the firm's first hotel project in Taiwan, AB Concept created an airy lobby with a three-storey high wooden chandelier as its focal point. Layers of light peek through wooden panels of a part-fixture, part-column chandelier, with its colour and texture echoed in other columns within the lobby.

The liberal use of wood is evident throughout the hotel, with a series of screens in each of the restaurants that reference the lobby. "The screens were introduced to deal with the circular shape of the architecture, to give people a sense of direction," says Ng. "Each of the screens were designed to tie in with the concept of each of the areas. Further to its dividing function, it also creates a layering effect within the space."



**Company name:** AB Concept Ltd.

**Date established:** 1999

**Director(s):** Ed Ng, Terence Ngan

**Total number of staff:** 30

**Contact details:** 1801 Leighton Centre, 77 Leighton Road, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. Tel: +852 2525 2428, [www.abconcept.com.hk](http://www.abconcept.com.hk)

**Notable projects:** Hotel Jen, Hong Kong; Lanson Place Central Park Residence, Beijing; Shangri-La's Far Eastern Plaza Hotel, Tainan

**Projects in the pipeline:** W Hotels in Yokohama and Bali; French Restaurant in IFC; Jeddah Corniche Hotel & Residence Tower in Saudi Arabia

**Most recent honour:** Winner of the 2009 Hospitality Design (HD) Awards in the Mid-range/Economy Hotel category for Hotel Jen

**Design hero:** Andree Putman

**Worst thing about practising in Hong Kong:** "The mentality in Hong Kong for maximum cost efficiency sometimes beyond limits sacrifices the intangible value of aesthetic emotion."

**Most cherished designer object:** "i-phone"