

To find the best suitable typology for a contemporary art museum in Hong Kong seems to be a pretty interesting topic (or at least I'm convincing myself this is). The main reason is that Hong Kong did not have a precedent museum about contemporary art, nothing like MAD (NYC) or New Museum (NYC) or MoMA (NYC) that happened in Hong Kong before. Perhaps when I mix this new programme (contemporary art is actually a concept imported from the west) with the unique Hong Kong culture and context, and do it just right, the alchemy might give something very special.

There are multiple reasons (I think) why contemporary art museum did not happen in Hong Kong. (Or the current one really not as exciting as those mentioned above)

1. **There isn't much interest in 'Art' in the Hong Kong community** (even the more elite / well educated group) when compared to NYC for example.
2. Investment speculation (from mainland and overseas) on art work, and their interest in traditional paintings, dominated part of the creative stage.
3. **Insufficient financial support** (by means of grants, awards) to artist. It is difficult to engage with creative development or craft/skill perfection with such financial burden.
4. Some artist manage to finance themselves by direct sales. Art galleries that represent individual artist are emerging because of the economic advantage. In contrast, museums in Hong Kong are not able to offer similar financial backup to artist.
5. **The general public perceives 'Art' with a old preconception, and consider it as an luxury for the rich: Not an object that everyone can enjoy or be placed in the public that enhance the space around them in everyday life.**
6. Lack of famous Artist figure in the city. (Famous in terms of publicity among general citizen)
7. **Many artist are part-time or emerging artist, they do not have a large collection of works for a formal museum exhibition.**

It could be observed that art galleries, which are more profitable to the artist, are the more preferred space to display their work than museums. This is not surprising under the context of the economic driven society in Hong Kong, particularly when

**press their individual message, and to distinct themselves from each other.** This will create a much more vibrant dialog between different exhibition, especially when the works become more eclectic under the realm of contemporary arts. This is particularly different from a fine arts museum where the author of the art are usually dead. (no offence, but true) Here, we are confronted with the current moment, art that communicate contemporary issues and are closely related to its author. This also means that there is a smaller focus on permanent exhibitions or storage of works in the museum.

**New arts in Hong Kong has only been developing in recent years, many artist are still far from their mature period.** We could not expect to get the Wow effect similar to an exhibition by artist like Anish Kapoor or Ai Weiwei. **The museum's current role in Hong Kong is to support the development of the local artist community by introducing them to the public, rather than to rely on importing foreign art.** The museum should strive to exhibit works from prominent young artist even whom has not received significant recognition. In response to the fact that many of these artist do not have a large collection, the museum should be flexible to curate smaller exhibitions. The intension is to allow more young artist to gain exposure even without a significant number of works to display.

**The museum could serve more than just an exhibition ground for one way communication. Spaces could be designed to encourage discussions and interactions** between all parties, especially if the artist could participate in the exhibition, either explaining their own work or in the case of performing arts. The layout should not be isolating people from each other but to allow unexpected confrontation which fosters the experience of exploration with the idea of discovering the unknown (this new contemporary art medium) in a museum.

It is the museum's role to redefine and present what contemporary art is, through understanding and enhancing the nature of contemporary art, (which is timely, provocative and society engaged) and presenting them in an appropriate architectural framework. Ultimately destroying the preconception of the general public that museums are only for the elite, by a completely new architectural experience that invoke new attitudes towards the exhibits.

**to consume the information.** Visual attraction is crucial, thus the most attractive goods are put close to the windows, hoping to stop people and eventually get in. The difference is that a shopping mall draws in customers not because of its facade appearance but because visitors have expectations towards what shops they will encounter. **In Hong Kong where citizens have a low motivation to visit art museums, the museum needs to be opened to the streets. The museum must present (in a crude manner - visually showing) what is happening inside.** I don't believe we can rely on media or simple speculation for publicizing the museum. The architecture have to naively tell the public that it has something interesting to offer by being transparent and extrovert.

#### **Cube Store (格仔店)**

One very interesting bottom-up retail philosophy is that **each store has only a few interesting item to offer**, most of the other items (some consider as side products) are there only to fill up the left over space so that it is still profitable. However because a store cannot be as tiny as a few square meters, it cannot shrink to its minimum because otherwise pedestrians might not notice their presence. **Proposer of the distinctive Cube Store is to exploit this phenomenon, by dividing up a store into cubes of very small size**, and renting them to many individual entrepreneurs who will usually focus on displaying a few products.

This metaphor to an art museum is very valid when we view the artist community in Fotan as a whole, which contains many small galleries and workshop, which are doing different things. Every one of them are focused on a slightly different topic and they only have a small amount of art work to display. Visitors would have a low motivation to visit one of these individual workshops if they are dispersed. However, located in Fotan, **visitors would come and visit the artist community as a whole, as if they are visiting a village or museum.** The importance of this kind of concentration is the ability for each gallery or workshop to remain distinctive and unique, be it a unique decoration of the factory space or the style of presentation they choose.

The museum could learn from the Cube Store methodology that such spatial division could be attractive to people who have no idea what the complex has to offer. The visual implication of a obviously divided space is that there are variety of arts in the museum. **The museum's role is to act as a whole in promoting the exhibits, but also acting as a hub that allows individual gallery owners to be distinguishable.** Galleries would be designed to have individual characteristic, differentiated in sizes and openings and its relationship to the street and internal circulation. This is important for many local artist as their names are insufficient to communicate what they are about. (not like a name for example 'Jeff Koons' would be self explanatory and attractive) The reaction of the artist towards the space when designing an exhibition could tell much more to the audience.

There are at least two levels of organizational relationship. One is the role of the museum in the city, acting as a focal point for gathering the artist community and attracting visitors. Second is within the museum, where individual artist retain certain freedom in their curated gallery. **One can view it as a city within a city.**

#### **Turrets**

**The museum will use a dramatic panopticon 'store-front' scene to confront the visitors, this is to recreate an image that the museum is an active and exciting place.** Visitors that come into the museum are first exposed to such scene and be impressed by the amount of exhibitions and galleries that the museum has, then s/he will proceed to experience the exhibitions themselves. There is a linkage to a movie scene in Star Wars showing the Galactic Senate's Chamber, which is a hemispheric void that is surrounded by many pods. The setting allows a direct visual contact with everyone in the chamber, and if anyone is making a speech, the pod of the speaker can fly into the space to gain spatial importance. I believe there could be some architectural exploration that investigate into this changeable/adaptable configuration, where the museum could indicate spatial importance in a different way. This could perhaps be a light signal or a dynamic system that could indicate extra information for visitors, for example the popularity of the gallery or how soon will an exhibition be closed.

Similar to the idea of a medieval turrets that protrudes from a castle, which gain a significant spatial significance. Each divided gallery could be allowed to change its spatial significance, to emphasis certain exhibitions or to give a visual guide to visitors. Otherwise, in a static configuration, some galleries could have a permanently higher significance, while it would be arranged to feature some permanent exhibition or important temporary exhibition.

# HKMoCA

## Hong Kong Museum of Contemporary Art

the government and the councils do not have the vision to promote Art with substantial support.

It is apparent that the role of a museum in Hong Kong is to compensate the monolithic culture by providing an alternative channel of exhibition. **Any modern (not to say contemporary) art museum should engage with the society and house works that share the same agenda.** It is lucky that the given site locates in the middle of the metropolitan Hong Kong, at a very strategic location. (Being close to the future Government HQ)

As the definition of 'Art' is becoming more and more loose with the contemporary interpretation of New Arts. (Despite conflict for art classification is actually become more intense) I would consider craft, design, digital and multimedia and performing arts to be appropriate topics beside traditional painting and sculpture under the realm of Contemporary Art. **They should have a dialog with on-going issues in the society, and should be provocative, timely and relevant.**

Generally speaking, an art museum should aim to elevate the society's appreciation of art. This may mean taking into account the eclectic interest of different audience. **The ideal result is that, through the museum, art could reach a broader range of people, especially to those who are excluded before.** A successful museum in Hong Kong should cover a broad range of topics, because of the eclectic nature of its citizens. The museum should be flexible in selecting its exhibits and is willing to try experimental means of exhibitions. This means that traditional white box typology might not be the desired architectural solution and the substance constituting the exhibitions may no longer be just paintings.

Contemporary art are timely and is closely related to the artist's personal believe. **The space given to individual artist (or group of artists) should allow certain customization to ex-**

These ideas will be the draft of my design statement in my next project. Which is to propose a design for an art museum in the current Harcourt Garden, Admiralty, in the heart of Hong Kong. I wish to have a solid statement as my design rational, which is carefully thought out to balance various aspects, to keep practicality and be construction conscious while pushing the architectural expression to a higher level. At the same time reacting to the context and be socially responsible as an architect. The following text explains some inspiration from the local culture, which has a strong relationship to how the museum could be materialize by the above mentioned findings.

#### **Shoppingmallism**

Hong Kong is famous for being a shopping paradise long time ago (not sure if it still is), the domination of commercial activities that drive the development of the city has long been criticized for its narrow interest in cultural development. I once heard an American professor saying that hong Kong is a big shopping mall, everywhere in the city has something to offer to attract your eye. This is of course important for shops in the most exotic districts in the Hong Kong where rents are too high to do anything stupid. It is only the most profitable business can stood its ground.

If we look at the shopping mall typology in Central, there is a rule of thumb not to design a glass facade or openings because of the loss in wall surface for the shops inside. This result is that many malls have a blank facade on the outside and window displays are showed towards the interior circulation of the mall. The only exception is the ground level where pedestrian flow is significant.

In finding a suitable typology for the museum that introduce new art to the public, I believe it is interesting to learn from the shopping mall. **The similarity is to attract people's attention and interest, even though they are not consciously seeking**