

MS FLORENCE CHAN:

Thank you to the Home Affairs Bureau and the Hong Kong Institute of Architects for having me here. I was overwhelmed by the two speakers in front of me who have shown me tons of projects, and I think if they are young architects, then I am the infant.

Today I am going to share more of my experience working overseas and maybe follow with a few projects that I have worked on.

I consider myself as a very typical Hong Kong person. I worked hard in school. I went to university hoping to earn myself a respectable job in the future living happily in Hong Kong. However, my study in architecture in the Chinese University of Hong Kong started to change my perspective about life and about the world.

During that time, we were exposed to a lot of images, discussions about buildings around the world. After I finished my school at Chinese U, I decided that I was going to take a trip and go to the United States and study. To my own surprise and even to my parents' surprise, I decided to pursue a Masters degree and then stay there for eight years now.

I went to Harvard, the same place that the other guests have been to. It is a place where I think there are a lot of ideas and a lot of people with ambitions. I could spend hours talking to you about all the good and bad experiences I had, but I think the most important lesson that I learned was that everyone seems to have a sense of purpose there - all the students, all of the faculty members.

There are students who want to be the great architects of the world, and there are people who purely want to pursue architecture as a form of knowledge and, of course, there are people also who want to establish their social network.

For me, I think that is very important and that is what

I got from this school is what is a sense of purpose when you go, wherever you go. After my studies, I decided that I should start working after seven-and-a-half years of studies. I asked myself what exactly do I want to learn from my professional experience and what should it entail? I decided that I wanted to be in a place where there is an office that has a lot of international recognition, not only because of the names but also because of the projects and the experiences that they were going to give me.

I landed a job in Cesar Pelli's office, where I have been for five years now. I moved to Connecticut, which is probably a place a lot of you may not know. It is somewhere between Boston and New York, and it is not a great city to be honest with you. I cannot even call it a city. It is probably a town. There is no subway, only maybe a little bus line. That is pretty much it. The good news is that it is only one-and-a-half hour away from New York. This is where New Haven is.

This is our office here. We build tall buildings but we work in a very short building. Our office is pretty much like a design studio in a way that every project room is very small -- probably 3 to 4 people and 10 people at most. As you can see from this picture, models are everywhere and it is still the major form in which we study buildings.

We have about 100 people right now, and we have projects all around the world. Let me show you some of the phases. One good thing as a young architect working in Pelli's office I think is we have a lot of opportunities in participating in the meetings, meeting Cesar for design reviews. Cesar is a very approachable person, and he knows every single person by name and what they do.

Now, let me show you some of my projects. This is not my projects but some of the experiences that I have had working with Pelli. One the very first projects which I spent three years with is a project in Houston, Texas. This is what I

learned, Texas BBQ and also America football. It is a project for the University of Houston, which consists of a lavatory building and 550-seat auditorium and a two-storey classroom building.

Having the opportunity to work in Houston I realised the climate is actually very similar to Hong Kong where you have very humid and hot summers and very mild winters. As you can see from here is the north facade of the research building in the background where we actually have put lot of glass, but on the south we changed the strategy to a more heavily shaded device and also a more solid and opaque wall.

I think a good experience working in the States is our choices of materials. There are more choices I would say. Bricks, glass, metal, is something which I think the experience in Hong Kong's may be lacking. Here are some more views.

In this project I also had the opportunity to work with an artist called Jakup Ferri from New York. What we ended up doing is a wall that was about 60 feet long, and this consisted of 2,500 pieces of wood. I helped in staining and putting together this wall.

The next project I am going to show you is of an extreme climate, which is very opposite to Houston, which my boss assigned me to in winter. I am very surprised to see so many people with connections to Winnipeg, and this is an area of Winnipeg. As you see all of this white area is actually snow. The whole city is covered with snow probably by now. Here is another view of the city. This is pretty much what it looks like.

Airport projects -- I have always been fascinated with airports partly because I always think that I only see half of building with another half of the building being a secured area, which I am not able to see. These are some views of the airport. I have to agree with Professor Gus about being able to detail a building in cool climates. I realised that cold

bridges are always a problem, and I was told that if I cannot detail the curtain wall well, water is going to get in and then is going to form ice and then crack.

The last project I am going to show you actually brings me back to Hong Kong. I had the opportunity to work on a project in Shanghai with a Hong Kong developer, who is also here today. For me, it was a great experience. After working for four years, I find when I come back to Hong Kong and to try to see what a difference I have with my experience versus the team that I am working with right now who are all Hong Kong born, raised, and educated -- not educated -- yes. A lot of them are actually from Hong Kong.

This is a project in Pudong, which is where all the skyscrapers are located these days. We do a lot of models as I said. Models are our primary form of study. I think I probably should not say too much about this project because I am sure there are people in the audience who know way more about this project than I do. This is a project consisting of two towers about 250 metres tall and a W hotel, which is 24 storeys high, and then a podium that links everything together. There is another view of the project.

That concludes pretty much my presentation. I remember when I was first invited to this symposium, we got a list of questions from Professor Leung, and one of them was asking about what is your advice that you will give to the young people of Hong Kong today in order to build up their confidence and be creative.

I do not think I am really here to provide an answer but what strikes me is the world confidence in this question. As a young architect I felt I was constantly being challenged and constantly having these self-identity crises. Our mood would swing from one end to another and easily about whether our boss likes our work, our teacher likes our work. I think it is very important for all the young architects to be able to handle how you take your criticisms and how you handle

yourself. In that sense I do feel like confidence is a very important part that you have to handle and try to find your way out of it. Thank you very much.