

PROF GUS DA ROZA:

Friends and colleagues, in place of illustrating my architecture and design projects, I would like to talk about diverse opportunities. Our young Hong Kong architects have in pursuing their design and professional careers.

Your panel of speakers today best exemplify what I wish to share with you. They all, and I, are from Hong Kong with common background and similar difficulties in our individual pursuit of design and or architectural careers.

I was born in Hong Kong and following my early Portuguese education in Macau, I returned to learn English by completing my school and matriculation years at La Salle College.

I was fortunate to enter the inaugural class of the five year architectural program at the University of Hong Kong under Professor Gordon Brown.

Following graduation, I worked for Professor Brown in his architectural office. In addition, I served as a design critic in the architectural studio and I also taught graphic presentation. These provided me with a pragmatic and disciplined approach in my professional work.

I was invited to join the teaching staff at the University of California in Berkeley by Dean William Wurster, who came to Hong Kong to design the American Consulate Building in Garden Road. Following my teaching years at Berkeley and summer jobs in San Francisco and for Walter Gropius at TAC -- that is the Architects Collaborative -- in Cambridge, Massachusetts, I joined the teaching staff at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada, where I spent 30 years teaching and practicing my own architectural profession.

I am proof that the education received at our own University of Hong Kong is as good as any of it throughout the English speaking and western world of the mid 20th century.

My practice led me to undertake projects coast to coast across Canada and south of the United States.

I travelled extensively across Canada and visited many architectural schools in the States. I returned to Hong Kong in 1987 to assist a former Hong Kong U classmate and colleague designing many of his projects until I obtained my own commissions for projects here in South East Asia.

Presently I am serving as design consultant in Hong Kong and cities in China and involved with projects in the United States and at home in Canada. The challenges that we face today in architecture are quite different to what we faced in the 1950s.

The role and responsibilities of an architect have greatly changed as well as the public's perception of our profession. Other than develop clients and their team of project managers, the public still thinks of us as artists drawing pretty pictures that engineers and contractors build.

Therefore, they greatly underpay us for what we do and what we have to be responsible for legally as well as professionally. An architect today can no longer count on the sound financial income for our time spent and costs our parents spent years to learn and gain experience to do resulting that majority of our urban and built environment has so much unsightly projects and with problems.

Architectural schools all over the world are partly to blame. The 50s and 60s were growth years with establishment of new architectural schools and hiring of more teachers. The economic crunch of the 1970s, partly caused by the energy crisis and wars in the oil-rich Middle East, saw a drastic shrinking of university resources resulting in poor and unfortunate decisions by academia as many architectural and professional schools have been continuously staffed and directed by academics without knowledge or understanding of the difficulties and challenges that our changing profession must face and work with.

The architectural education I received at the University of Hong Kong in the early 1950s provided me with an understanding of what we are and what we do, the skills to create and resolve what our clients, our community, and our society need. The knowledge and discipline to work within budget and with materials we have access to in order to contribute to the built environment we all live in, play in, and work in.

As academia's decision to hire staff without practiced skills and experience, architectural schools lost role models for the unfortunate students. Nevertheless, I must add that my former colleague, Professor Eric Li struggled through these difficult decades and made quite significant contributions to my alma mater.

Other than the minimal cost in professional practice, architectural schools have not given us the knowledge and skills to get work. I do not mean getting employment to earn minimum wages as a draftsman or design assistant but as a full-fledged professional. Schools should provide our budding architects with a knowledge and understanding of our role, the duties and responsibilities we will face, the discipline management of private practice, and experience in working with site, climate, and environmental constraints in their architectural design exercises.

Faced with the severe and hostile climate of the coldest city in Canada, the city of Winnipeg, where I spent over 30 years working and living in, my colleagues and my students have been forced to learn to know and to understand what we must do in design and building and create the quality of spaces we all live, play, and work in.

The extreme cold of a northern place or site have very special and demanding needs and requirements that are important designed determinants and must be met. Mistakes in our technological response to severe climate and environment are very unforgiving.

Similarly, hot and humid places, such as our very own subtropical Hong Kong, has its own set of demanding conditions, requirements that we architects, designers, and engineers must address. We must understand and we must work with for our various designs and projects.

Until architects understand and respond to the special needs and conditions of site, climate, and environment, we all and humanity at large will need to face a very harsh and difficult crisis requiring costly solutions for our survival.

Architects today are faced with extreme and demanding challenges. I prefer not to call this a drastic challenge but rather to call this a great opportunity. Special difficulties of our climate and environment can and should encourage us to learn more about the terms and conditions we must work with.

I am not speaking only of new vehicles consuming less fuel, nor manufacturers using less non-renewable energy while continuing to pollute what we all need to live in. We must learn to participate with our technical and scientific colleagues searching for design and visual solutions we can create and positively contribute to society.

Architectural schools should develop, invent, and create courses to nurture this challenging and demanding direction, which our young and future architects and designers can work and strive for in developing appropriate and contributive ideas and solutions. Our coming generation of young Hong Kong architects and designers know they can work anywhere in the world and should also know how to pursue a thorough understanding of climate and environment and how to exploit this new challenge in creating the physical structures and places they and all of us can live, play, and work in comfortably, be environmental responsible and with good health.

Today's built environment of Hong Kong are superb examples of architecture responding to severe site, economic and functional needs and requirements, and maximum financial

returns resulting in stacked and multiplied high-rise towers with extreme circulation and traffic solutions. Any area photograph of our urban environment will do.

We can travel, visit, and see the masterpieces of the past in Europe, Asia, and the Americas designed in response to society's needs for places to meet, to worship to, play, and to live in. Any postcard or digital image of our historical masterpieces will do. We can also travel and visit the buildings invented by today's architectural prima donnas and see the creative and dramatic composition of their variant building forms. Unfortunately, few prize winners positively respond to climate and environmental conditions and will require costly change and correction. Any of your own personal favourites will do.

Today, I am suggesting or teasing or tantalising all of you to consider pursuing climate and environment as important design determinants when you create and develop your ideas and concepts for competition entries, for hard earned commissions, and in your own personal search into building form and massing in your design projects. You all can do it. Thank you.