

MR WILLIAM LIU:

Hello. My name is William. I am one of the founders of ARK. Today I am going to talk about practice of architecture in Hong Kong.

First of all, I want to say something about the practice of architecture in Hong Kong because that is what most of my work is. It is very hard and it is very difficult because, firstly, we are a very young practice. We are four years old, and we mainly do developer work and with developer work, there are a lot constraints from the developers needs, a business need, as well as meeting the regulation. That is why a lot of architects in Hong Kong really struggle in some of these areas.

We are going to look at four situations, three Hong Kong conditions which are very hard to innovate on. The first project is Grand Promenade. This is a residential development, a 60 storey residential development. This situation is called a typical plan. We are actually the elevation architects. Only in Hong Kong do you get another architect to do the plan and the developer gives it to you to do the elevation.

We have all seen these buildings, tall monoliths in a response to the kind of crucifix plan. This is the elevation. It is a 60-storey building, a lot higher than the surroundings. Our challenge was how do we deal with such a large wall effect of the building?

First of all, you can see in the centre there is a split. That is the sky garden. We split that and using colour we shifted the colour application on the building. In fact, for the elevation of the tower when we took this on board, all the precast panels were done already. Our job was really an application of colour for the tower but we had more freedom on the podium. This is a diagram of how we dealt with this. First, you can see there is a cut and then we made a shift and then we applied different textures of colour just to give the building a richness. On the diagram on right, you

can see the composition in relation to the tower and the podium as well. The podium becomes horizontal as a contrast.

Here is a close up and you can see the richness in the colours and this is an elevation that we did. That is the close-up of the richness of the colours. That is a diagram on the left. Here you can see a view of the top. You can see the shift in the colour. As we move towards the podium, we used a concept called strata elevation. Basically we tried to express honestly what happens at the ground level. At the ground level there is a bus terminus and the entrance.

You can see below this box is the main entrance to the building. The level above is a car park and above that is a glass curtain wall of the clubhouse. In fact, the box you see is actually a transformer room. We normally have to deal with a lot of these very difficult issues. It is above the entrance, so how do we address that? We have actually clad this in a gold sculptural effect to emphasise the horizontality.

This is the building at night, and we have added lighting strips to emphasise the dynamics of the building. This is another view. What you see on the green part there is actually a jogging path. What we did was we made an undulation in the jogging path to kind of stretch your legs as you are jogging.

This is the car park. They did not allow any space for greenery and a lot of residents will be looking down. So we used the idea of pixilation. We pixellated the car parks to form a pattern, and you see these vent shafts on top, and what we did was we added a layer of grass, pure grass on top just to give this artificial landscape.

The next one is the sky garden. We have these sky gardens in this structure. To form the sky garden, actually is not really a garden because as you can see the platform is the residual of the wall structure of the towers. What kind of strategy do we use? We used this layering concept. First, you can see on that diagram there is a colour. The colour is

the elevation folded in, so the elevation runs right into the garden. Then we have these overlapping fish pounds, pebble walks, greenery, and vertical elements. It is a strategy of overlapping the walls as you can see on the left on the bottom water coming through. There is a hole for kids to come and look through and greenery. That is the sky park. These are some of the views, the colour rooms. You can see some of the holes for the penetration.

The next development is Tan Kwai Tsuen. This is a residential development in Yuen Long. This situation, too, is bay windows -- kind of a nightmare for a lot of architects, but developers want them because you get GFA from them. Free GFA and you can sell them.

This development is in Yuen Long and it is a low-rise. Again we were given a plan from another architect, so we had to design the elevation. How did we deal with that? Our office is actually concerned with branding and experience design. We tried to look at this in a positive way, maybe at low-rise, like a resort.

We took influence from the picture you see above, which is a resort village in an Italian town, and you can see the treatment is very interesting. It is actually the framing of the windows, so we took that idea and combined it with a very contemporary composition, and we had used a colour, we did it as classical window shields which are rotating shields.

This is the application to a bay window using different colours. We explored the different colour options and the rotation and that is the result. We have two different types, one is a white background with colour shields. This is a dark background with white shields, which I personally like very much. This is a very successful project because it only uses concrete and paint, so it is very cost effective, and the developer really liked this because we really saved a lot of money.

The next one is called a village house. Situation 3,

this is called a Ding house. In China, for those who may not know, in Hong Kong there is a phenomenon where the indigenous villagers get a 700 square foot plot of land, and they can build three storeys. You see a lot of these typical houses, which are three storeys of 700 square feet plots, which are quite popular now. With this house what you see on your left is the typical section, which is that you have public space, living room, and then private on the top. That is a typical section. How we innovated was that we flipped the section around. The section is actually like a Le Corbusier house which he designed in the '30s.

The idea is that we have a kind of shift in the public space, and the idea with this house is that we wanted to have a lot of interaction between just the family itself. We actually put the staircase in the centre. In every part of this house, you can see on different areas it is a very interactive house. That is the development and on the top corner you can see the space. The elevation is developed like a wrap, a very dynamic wrap in response to the space behind.

Large open spaces responding to private, the public space, and then punch windows responding to the bedrooms. That is the model and that is the outcome. You can see the two triangular spaces which are the public spaces. This is a view at night. This is a view of the staircase. The one on the top corner is the model and that is the final one.

What is interesting there is the space which kind of pops in, which is bringing the exterior inside. That was actually inspired by my trip to Taliesin, Frank Lloyd Wright. There was a corner which I saw in Taliesin where he played with this -- he actually got his architects to build this phenomenon.

Another thing was that this project is the longest design project that I ever took. It took three years to design because my wife was the client. She is not here tonight so it is okay to say that.

The next project is Orange House. This is a boutique hotel in Nanling Forest. This situation is dealing with existing buildings. The story behind this building was that one day I got a call from a Chinese client. He said, okay, go to Nanling and have a look at this building. I want you to work on it. I said, what is that? What kind of project is it? He said, just go and have a look.

I took a three-hour car ride from Guangzhou and we ended up in Nanling National Forest Park. He said that is the building you have to work on. This is an existing guesthouse which they wanted to turn into a boutique hotel. This is actually a very interesting program because the client is very into arts, and he actually co-ordinated a French-Sino artist exchange where he invited a lot of French artists to do installations in that small community town. It is very challenging because it is actually in an artistic context.

This is the facade. What we proposed to do was we developed this concept of textured layers where we added different textures of wood, green. The wood you see is, the concept is like a ribbon which wraps around and on the floors in different directions giving a very sculptural effect. The concept basically is wood plus the windows, colours, and together as one equals the building.

With the orange we did a very horizontal bandings because we wanted to break down the punch window of the building to give it a very strong vigour and that is the final outcome. That is the Orange House. The story behind Orange House, how that name came about is quite interesting, too, because when we were having a meeting the client asked -- the original colour was green, and I do not like green so what colour do you propose? I said, how about orange? And then he said orange is good because -- this is coming from a Chinese client as I remember -- he said O Range House so it is like a range representing a mountain. I thought that was quite interesting.

These are the side balconies. We wanted the balconies

to look like they had a very sculptural quality and that is the view I really like looking from one of the balconies. The building has very simple very sculptural effect when you look in different directions.

This is a night view of the corridor. The lighting is also very interesting because this building is an ecotourism hotel. The client who had a degree in this, he said at night it is very important to experience the darkness rather than the light. We had to actually design the darkness rather than the light.

What you see there, the only light comes from the signage plates and also the railings. The railings are a double layer of stainless steel and below it underneath the stone cap there is a fluorescent tube which directs the lighting indirectly. It bounces off the railings on to it. It is quite beautiful.

There is a small touch which I really like on the glass door. You can see this orange. It is actually a sticker, which the orange continues as a floating orange piece. That is the view at night. That is the existing stairs tower. That is another view of the entrance. At the entrance there is a light box which people can sit on, so it is a waiting place. That is the final slide.

That is our office. That is at Christmas dinner. I think creativity is about the interaction of different talents. I think that is very important. That is our office team and creativity is about play. We find that very important, too.

I just want to answer one last question for young people. I believe if you want to do architecture, you have to have passion. You have to find your own passion for anything. I believe that we are designed to have a purpose, and we have to find that purpose in life whatever it is. If you are an artist, be an artist. If you are a pianist, be a pianist. If you are an architect, be that.

You have to have perseverance. For me, it took me more than 10 years to get to where I am, so you have to persevere and not lose heart and not to lose sight. Thank you. God bless you.