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On Herzog & de Meuron's vision for Hong Kong's West Kowloon Cultural District M+ project, where an intercultural forum is literally emerging from below the ground

Herzog & de Meuron就香港西九文化區M+博物館的建造，分享對地下跨文化浮現的看法

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A cinematic presence

Text: Alex Yu Photography: Courtesy of Marcel Lam and The Luk Hoi Tong Company

At one of the busiest junctions in Hong Kong, vibrant street scenes from the repaved passageway of Theatre Lane reflect on the transparent folding façade of the LHT Tower, reminiscent of the fleeting moving images from the now-demolished Queen's Theatre



Escalators at the entrance adjacent to the glass curtain walls

In Hong Kong's always busy, always heaving Central, commuters exit the MTR station between street stalls to find the slanted folds of LHT Tower's curtain walls subtly referencing the theatre drapes of the now long-gone Queen's Theatre. "With a widening canopy and transparent shielded façade, the expanded public space was envisioned like an European plaza," says Darrell Chan, executive director of The Luk Hoi Tong Company.

The company's founders, Chan Fu Cheung and his father Chan Yam Kwok — supporters of Sun Yat-sen — are remembered in this chapter of local history as statues in the lobby. Back in the day, the Queen's Theatre saw exquisite Art Deco motifs from an arched entrance to the intricate sculpted façade. Proudly housing the Savoy Restaurant and the first air-conditioned cinema in Hong Kong, the site's popularity and prestige were evident with its own publication, *Queen's Theatre Weekly*.

A brown-glass Luk Hoi Tong Building was introduced during the 1958 office redevelopment by one of the most industrious local architects at the time — Chu Pin from Kwan, Chu and Yang. Erected on a mere 975 sq-m construction site besides a widened, pedestrianised pavement on a gentle slope, it combined a three-level cinema and underground floors of shops and restaurants.

Together with the adjacent Tak Shing Building, also by the same architect, these two marvels boasted fast lifts and the latest glass technologies, given the first glass-curtain building was only completed in the US in 1952. This 12-storey office block went on to witness countless dramas from streetwise shoe polishers to a political activist dressed as Spiderman, unlawfully occupying its outdoor screen.

Clockwise from top left: The lift lobby by DCM Studios • Original Queen's Theatre façade design of 1925 • The neighbouring streetscape surrounding the colonial architecture



As the closing credits of *Lust Caution* rolled in 2007—the last film screened at Queen's Theatre—a redevelopment plan foresaw the site reincarnated as a Grade-A mixed-use commercial block. Completed in November 2011, timely supply of office space and introduction of duplex shops for retail brands replaced exposed pipework and a blank backdrop with transparent curtain walls opposite luxurious, vertically proportioned limestone.

"The passageway gets lots of traffic every day and you cannot shut down the street," explains Chan, recalling the challenges of the construction process. "During the design process, we collaborated closely with neighbouring buildings on Theatre Lane to work out the final design for government approval."

Conceived by Rocco Design Architects, LHT Tower combines 21 office floors and six retail storeys, including a foyer by DCM Studios. "The main lift lobby on the first floor was inspired by some of the decorative motifs of the former theatre's interiors, and in general, some elements of mid-century Modernist cinema interior design," says Chan.

Its certified HK BEAM ECO Building Platinum rating encompasses double-glazed glass insulation units of high-performance low-E coatings, energy-efficient features from water conservation devices and sanitary fittings, as well as a Schindler's Miconic 10 lift control system—better coordinated vertical circulation promises faster travel times and significant energy savings.

The theatrical quality of this heritage site is not only revitalised through the ribbed facade wall to maximise natural lighting, but also with intricate light arrangements best experienced at night. Red, green and blue floor lights gather at the feet of the entrance as visitors are swept along by escalators illuminated by a sleek, long strip light. Chan compared the glamour of the 1960s masterpieces by Le Corbusier and Herman Miller to the vertical bronze detailing of the backlit screen at the main lobby—resembling the glowing lantern for the backlit screen, according to DCM Studios managing director James Gibson.

Despite the timeless beauty of such design classics, Chan says a commercial building such as this will need to evolve through time as the needs, demands and image of its tenants change—ensuring its longevity over the decades.



LHT Tower by Rocco Design Architects



The street view of the theatrical glass curtain walls

高台華戲

撰文：Alex Yu 摄影：由Marcel Lam及陸海通有限公司提供

戲院里位處香港最繁忙的路口之一，連接陸海通大廈外面重鋪的行人道。透明折疊的外牆映透熱鬧的街景，讓人想起在原址已拆卸的皇后戲院上映過段段的影畫

甫

步出中環地鐵站，置身香港最繁囂的市中心，店舖攤檔之間可以一窺傾斜褶皺的捲幕形玻璃幕牆，彷彿是舊皇后戲院的影子。陸海通有限公司的執行董事陳達光（Darrell）指出：「透過擴闊的遮蔭屏與透明的玻璃門面，擴闊整個公共空間，成為一個歐洲式廣場一樣。」

陸海通的創始人陳符祥與其父陳任國均為孫中山先生的支持者，大堂擺置的兩尊銅像正反映這段歷史。當時皇后戲院從拱門入口到精細雕琢的門面，均展現出裝飾藝術風格。戲院設有夏蕙餐廳和香港首間空調餐廳，並出版《影戲週刊》，風華與名望可見一斑。

1958年重建後，棕色玻璃外牆的陸海通大廈增添辦公室用地，由當時本土建樹來自基泰工程司建築師的朱彬，建在只有975平方米的建築用地，設有三層電影院與地牢商店餐廳。

相鄰的德成大廈同樣出自建築師朱彬之手。美國1952年才始用玻璃幕牆，因此兩座玻璃建築物都以最先進的技術及當時數一數二的快速升降機聞名。從擦鞋匠到一名蜘蛛俠打扮的示威者非法侵占戶外屏幕，這座12層高的辦公大樓相繼見證了無數的街頭劇。

皇后戲院2007年上演最後一齣電影《色戒》，其後重建工程展開，成為甲級商廈。2011年陸海通大廈完工後，及時提供辦公室單位與複式雙層商舖，並以華美的石灰岩與玻璃幕牆取代之前外露的喉管與空置

的宣傳背景幕。

Darrell憶述當中的挑戰：「行人道每天都有大量人流，不允許封路進行工程。設計過程中，我們跟毗鄰的大廈緊密合作，制定出最終設計後，交由政府審批。」

許李嚴建築師的構思讓陸海通大廈結合21個辦公樓層和六層零售商舖，包括DCM Studios的大廳。他指：「一樓電梯大堂的設計靈感來自戲院的裝飾圖案，總體而言結合了本世紀中葉現代主義電影院的一些室內設計元素。」

大廈榮獲白金評級的環保建築認證，針對高效節能，安裝省能的用水與衛生設備，以Schindler牌Miconic 10升降機控制系統，改善人流，縮減時間，顯著減低能源消耗。

外牆自然採光，曲折的表面折射出這歷史位置戲劇性的一面，尤其在晚間感受不同燈飾。入口處紅、綠、藍等顏色的地面前射燈，訪客時更會發現扶手電梯的輸送帶華麗亮起，就像一道延綿滑動的光。他轉述DCM Studios總監James Gibson的設計理念，指屏幕在青銅的垂直紋設計之間，在大堂變成發光的燈籠一樣，景象可媲美Le Corbusier與Herman Miller六十年代的不朽傑作。

設計經典能演繹出無窮美感，就如Darrell所指，像這座商業大廈，要配合租戶的需要和要求改變形象，確保建築物歷久常新。」



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