

ARCHITECT

MIDDLE EAST

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1/ A COMPUTER-GENERATED IMAGE OF THE 'GLASS BOXES' DESIGN FOR HKDI.
2/ AWARD-WINNING 'NAKED ARCHITECT', ALEXANDER WONG.



Hong Kong Design Institute

Architect: Alexander Wong
Location: Tiu Keng Leng, HK
Status: Design Stage

The design for the highly-anticipated Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI)—the brainchild of Princeton-educated, award-winning architect Alexander Wong—is one based on a very simple and very traditional Chinese philosophy: communities within communities. Wong, founder and director of Hong Kong's Asiatic Architects, sought to create a community that was, "beautiful because it was meaningful and meaningful because it was functional."

Wong's HKDI is an entire university campus composed of coloured glass boxes, which encourage students to interact with their fellow students as well as the surrounding Tiu Keng Leng community. "The outlook of the campus is inviting rather than intimidating, as none of the boxes are on a podium.... The structure of each box is mostly a simple column and beam system, enclosed by one or two solid walls made of unadulterated materials and the rest in elegant glass facades made of tinted glazing."

Wong uses 'Naked Architecture' in his 'Boxes' design for HKDI—a strategy that has earned him a spot among the final five architects vying for the right to build it. 'Naked Architecture', a phrase and school of thought developed by Wong and Asiatic, asks whether a certain structure has a clearly defined function; whether it is innovative and cost-effective; and whether it is environmentally responsible.

Though constructed of simple boxes, HKDI's design stretched the limits of Wong's creativity, as he insisted on a structure with a clear function and also a clear commitment to the environment. Wong's vision was achieved by, "transforming some of the vertical planes of the boxes into vertical gardens and waterfalls, to increase the surface areas for natural elements within the campus."