

OF DIFFERENT VIEWS

The quick-witted, award-winning architect Alexander Wong expresses his individuality and views in the design industry.

TEXT CLARA LING IMAGES COURTESY OF ALEXANDER WONG ARCHITECTS

Passionate and flamboyant Alexander Wong couldn't be more proud, as he clinched two wins at the prestigious Asia Pacific Property Awards this year. They are the Best Leisure Interior category for Carmen Futura while the Sogo Club was honoured Highly Commended for its retail interior. A post-graduate from Princeton University, Alexander Wong has been selected as one of the "100 Top Architecture & Design Talents in China." Known for his avant-garde designs, his architectural practice has evolved from a fusion office to a dynamic multi-disciplinary

powerhouse winning a number of impressive awards. Full of beans, his views on architecture bring about an identity that is one-of-a-kind. Fearless in his thoughts, it's never a mundane conversation with him.

How would you describe yourself?

Indescribable, of course (laughs). Beyond description...beyond future. Actually, I was born in Hong Kong. Genetically, I may have mixed-blood in me although I call myself Chinese - alien from outer space probably (laughs).



Was architecture always your first choice?

Of course not! I'm very curious about everything. I love art, science, maths, history and physics. It was due to some recommendations. Architecture was so hard that I struggled with it. I couldn't understand why that this particular way is good for design...from personal opinion at least. Somehow, I grew to love it. There's challenges and hardships but there's fun to it. After you have done many years of "architecture", you become a natural. The thing is I'm not a great fan of education anymore. The whole bubble of education is expensively ridiculous. I'm astonished at young architects' lack of preparation for the industry. Why are the teachings in universities incompetent? Most likely, apprenticeship is the way to go, where parents have to groom their kids to do one thing good at the age of four and they will become a natural at eighteen. Then, people will just enrol at Alexander Wong Architects (laughs).

Do journey us through your career.

Okay, I left for school to England earlier and later on to America to finish my education in architecture. Later, I returned to Hong Kong and started to work for large firms, small firms on business developments and developers. I met a lot of business leaders and for some

reason these people recognised me and were giving me a lot of job opportunities. Then I realised I could have my own firm and so it was set up 15 years ago. I never looked back since.

My first project was actually a shipyard. We were doing a lot of different types of projects and soon designing for cinemas and that's how the fantasy entertainment started - iconic entertainment. People recognise these themes as something we could add to the quality experience especially in shopping malls. We do fantasy design that is practical and translated into different cultures, not for the sake of fantasy.



On the contrary, the way we treat luxury homes is different. The Golden Eye project is the interpretation of all the show homes done in Asia with that layer of sophistication. It's not just about luxury or glamour but a deep level of narrative within the subconscious.

We also look into the details as how we did for MW Michael Wong, De Rucci and Sogo Club. Another line of our design is hygiene. In fact, the premier of People's Republic of China announced that all washrooms have to be revamped and upgraded for international tourists and we are proud of Aqua Futura (washroom). Beyond the sleek, sophisticated look, our washroom projects are functional modular in improving hygiene for the 21st century.

Would you say your futuristic design inspirations are drawn from movies?

Yes, we draw our inspirations from different disciplines that's why we are distinct; it's not just movies, novels or other things. To make architecture interesting you must have layers, no matter how small or large. It is about the multi-meaning of each design that got considered so the design is worthwhile to build. When things are related, hopefully in a harmonious way, the architecture will last. It has to be able to withstand the test of time.

What are some of your other interests besides architecture?

I want to go into food actually. Not food alone, but some kind of platform where it can be related to art, architecture, presentation and music. I just don't know what yet. Besides that, I love film, music, painting, photography and swimming. I do write for airline magazine on architecture. I had some of my works published like *Naked + White*, *Naked City*, *Naked Life* and recently *Archiphantasy*, ten years of our work. Oh, and travelling too if I have the time.

Since you have so many interests, do you have a balanced lifestyle?

No! I don't even know what that means. Why relax? I do sleep, once in a while. Why do I have to set such a rigid timetable? Well, I'm a creative individual! ❖

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"ARCHITECTURE IS NOT LIKE A LOT OF THINGS, IT BRINGS ABOUT ANOTHER LEVEL OF REALITY."

Alexander Wong, founder of Alexander Wong Architects.

