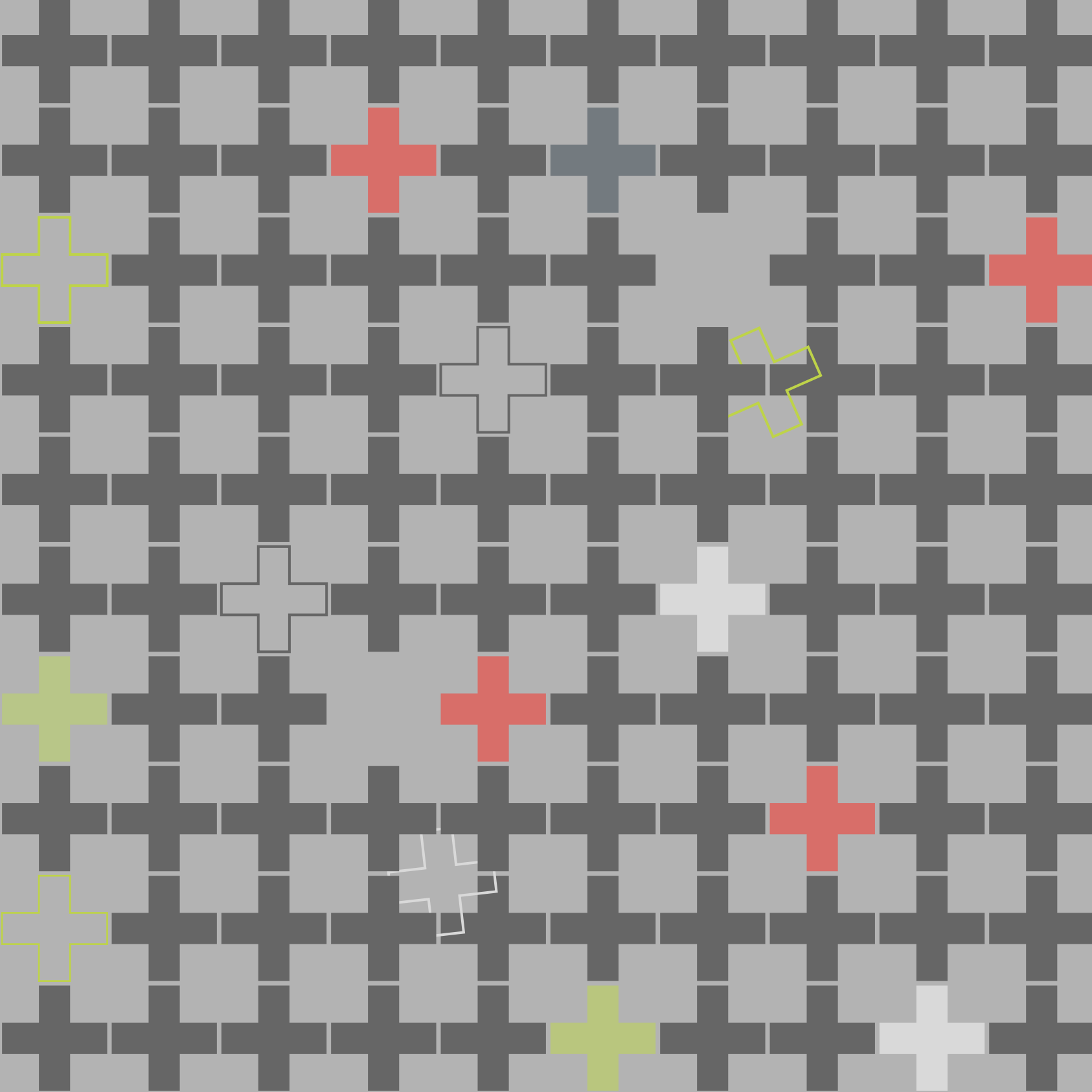


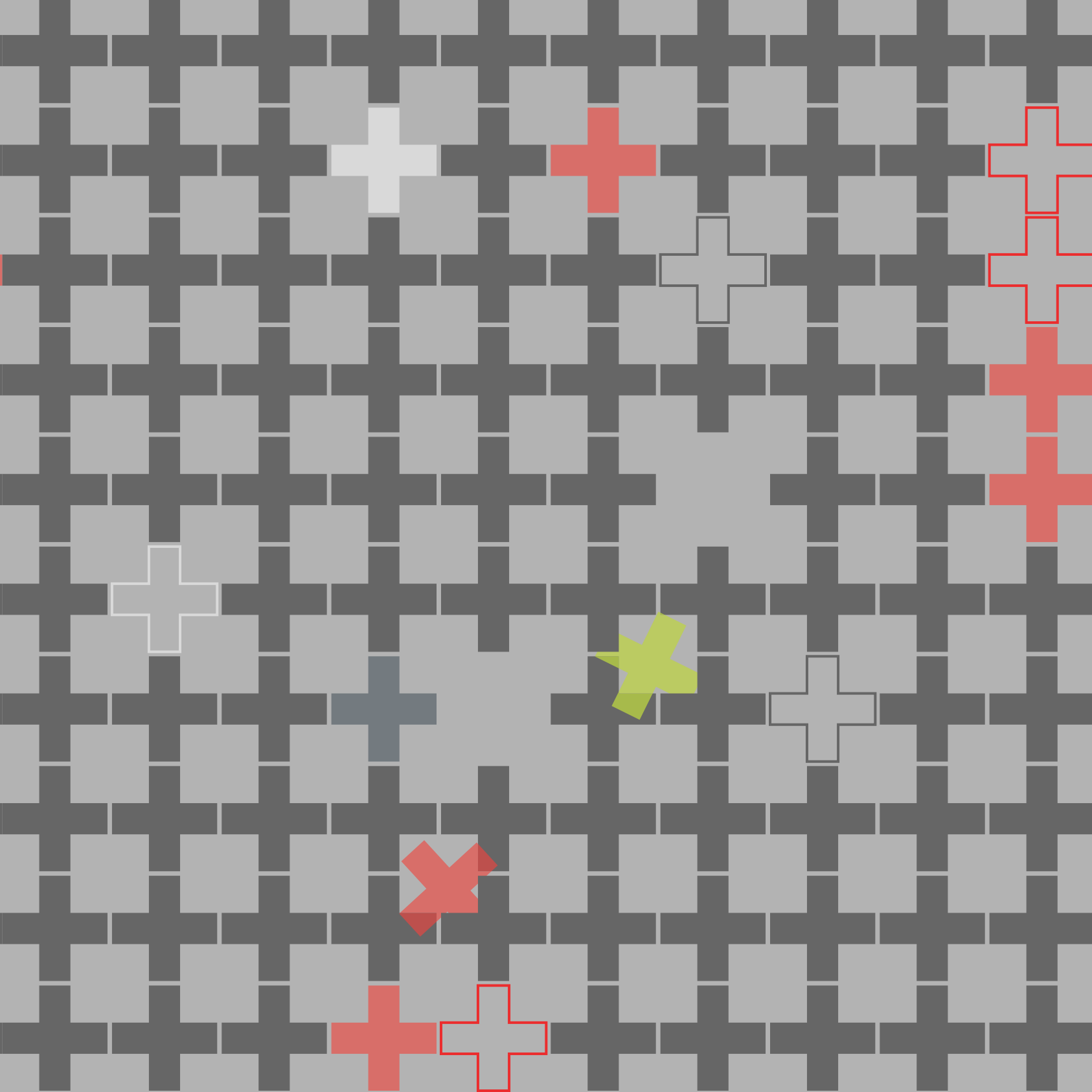
NAKED

+

WHITE

Alexander Wong







for my grandmother



NAKED + WHITE
Naked Architecture and Selected Works by Alexander Wong
Copyright © 2005 Asiacity Limited

Published by Asiacity Limited
Suite 1201, 12/F, The Centrium, 60 Wyndham Street,
Central, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2526 3016 Fax: (852) 2526 7126
<http://www.asiacity.com.hk>

ISBN 988 98627 2 7

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any other information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Printed and bound in China

NAKED

+

WHITE

Alexander Wong

Beginning

Naked Architecture by
Alexander Wong 010

Works

Boatyard 018
Jehle House 056
Spa 084
Star 096
Shopping 110
Jidou 122

Contents

Writings

Norman Foster	134
Philippe Starck	138
Hearst Castle	142
Michael Graves	144
Eileen Gray	146
Steven Holl	150
Miami	154
The Future Workplace	156
House as Office, Office as Home	158

Epilogue

Design by Envy or	
Envy versus Freedom	162
More About Alexander Wong	164
Selected Bibliography	166
Photos & Acknowledgements	168
Index	170

“ What we remember most is not only what we can see but also through those closest to our hearts.

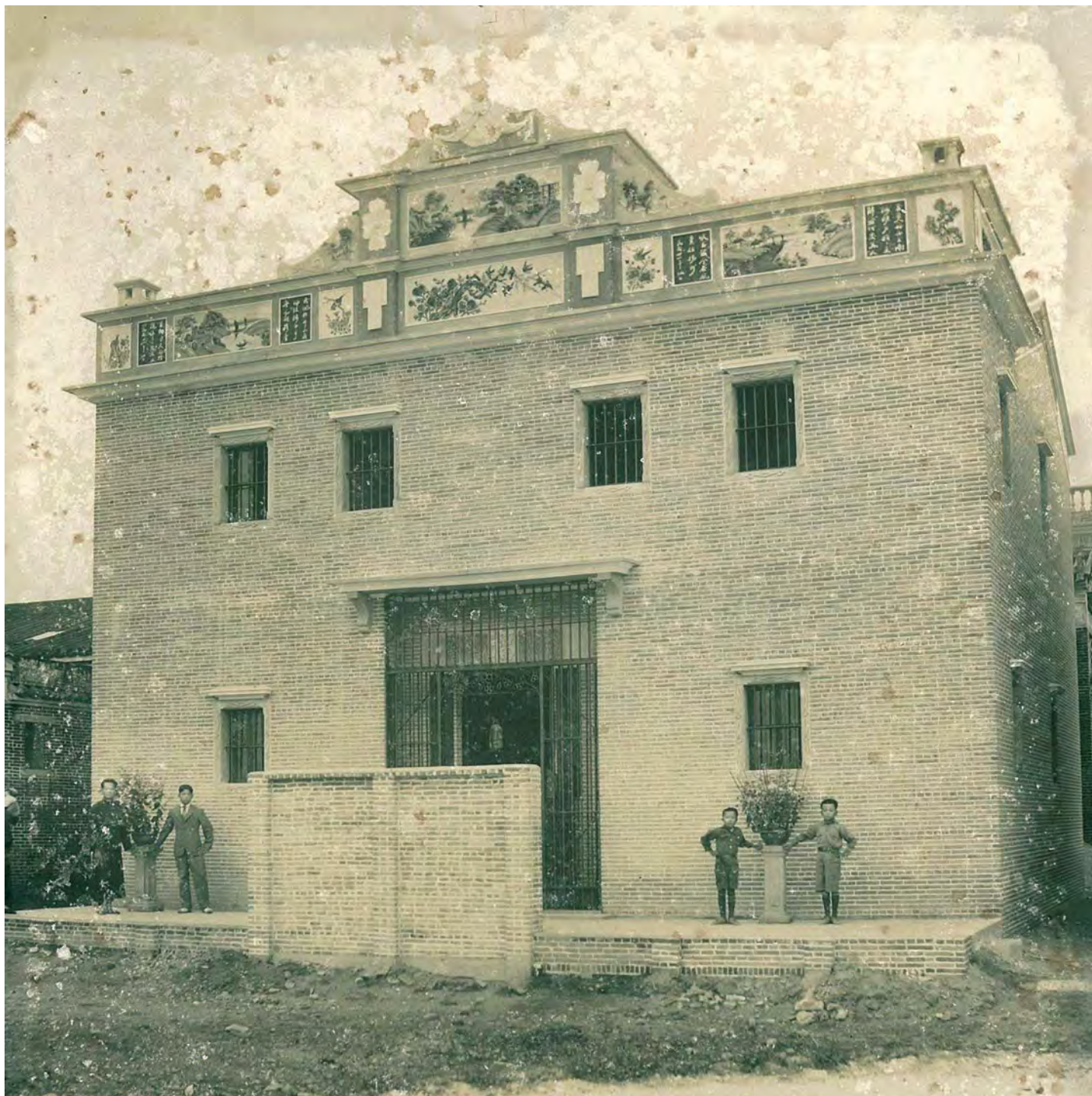
Now I go back in time and remember the first ray of sunlight; the first taste of food; the first sight of a human being - the back of an old lady - my grandmother, the first architect I met.

”

beginning

Naked

Architecture



The House in Toi Shan built by my Grandmother in the 1920's

Naked Architecture

What we remember most is not only what we can see but also through those closest to our hearts.

Now I go back in time and remember the first ray of sunlight; the first taste of food; the first sight of a human being - the back of an old lady - my grandmother, the first architect I met.

For decades, my grandmother told us stories about a farm house in China she once built when she was a young woman. It was constructed between the two World Wars - and to us, it might as well have been completed a century ago. Through her descriptions we knew the details of not only the design, but also the way it was constructed - like how she positioned the building according to the sun and wind; how she meticulously checked every brick from the kiln and all the way down to the food she prepared for her craftsmen and laborers. But most important of all, it was the pride whenever she talked about it. And to us, as her grandchildren, we dared not challenge the extent of what was spoken. But deep down, neither could we appreciate the magnitude of what she had achieved, nor did we believe in every word she said about the house. Not until she passed away at the grand old age of ninety-nine did we have a chance to visit our old farm and see the house with our own eyes for the very first time.

“...the building is a multi-purpose architectural machine - a barn, a castle, a bank, a safe-haven, an atrium, a house all distilled into one singular design.”

My Grandmother's House was constructed in the 1920's in a small village in Toi Shan within the Guangdong Province of Southern China. Designed with lots of ingenious and pragmatic features in mind, it is not just an ordinary farm cottage, but a highly sophisticated piece of 'Architectural Machine'.

To start, the main entrance inside is delineated by a dropped-level sunken tray, carved out from a single piece of stone, with a floor drain for the washing away of mud from the fields. From this vantage point, you look up and notice an amazing skylight, two-storeys up, allowing natural sunlight to penetrate into the house throughout the day. This must have been a truly innovative feature for a farm house back in the 1920's. And in order to keep the house safe, the ground and first floor could be separated by a horizontal iron gate that shuts out the ground level at night time. This will allow light and air to pass through whilst preventing intruders after dark from reaching the private quarters on the first level from below. All furniture was beautifully handcrafted with their design kept to a bare minimum, almost Shaker Style. And surprisingly, although everything is weather-beaten, nearly every element has been kept perfectly intact. There is a sense of sophisticated elegance in each detail, even the kitchen sink was handcarved out of a single piece of stone.

Naked Design

One could repeatedly find metal hooks bolted onto the soffit of the ceilings. These were used for the hanging and drying of clothes as well as farm produce during the wet seasons with the open sun roof playing another vital function - utilizing the sun's ultra-violet light for the drying and sterilization of preserved food, many items could be kept for years without rotting away. Everything is highly sophisticated and fully integrated with the life on the farm. In essence, the building is a multi-purpose architectural machine - a barn, a castle, a bank, a safe-haven, an atrium, a house all distilled into one singular design - and certainly, one of the most sophisticated 'machine à habiter' of the highest order I have ever visited. Every feature is simple yet multi-functional; down to earth but sophisticated; environmentally friendly yet dignified. Each design intention is so 'pared-down' that nothing is just simplistic for the sake of being minimal. Every item has a purpose and a soul. I was so inspired and empowered by this experience that I realized this is exactly what has been missing in the world of design today.

For most architects, there is an over-emphasis on 'form', 'beauty' and 'meaning', sometimes even at the expense of functionality. In this light, we have chosen to focus ourselves on a very different set of criteria. In our office, before we design anything, we ask ourselves the following questions: Do we really need what we are supposed to design in the first place? What does it do? Is our strategy an innovative approach in satisfying the needs? Is it multi-functional and light enough to be moved around at ease? Will it be structurally safe in spite of its lightness? How long can it be used in serving its purpose? Is it economical to be manufactured? How easy is it going to be repaired and maintained? Does it take a lot of effort to clean? Is it reusable and environmentally friendly? Can it be integrated seamlessly with its existing and future environments? Is it allowed to grow in time? We call this approach Naked Architecture. 'Naked', because it is stripped away of all layers of superficiality and pseudo-meanings.

“ Architecture to us is fundamentally a struggle to create a multi-functional, innovative environment that enhances the quality of living and create values inventively for our ever-evolving lifestyles.”

Economics of Architecture :
An agrarian cottage made out of
tree barks in Zhong Shan



In a sense, any space or object already possess a multitude of meanings encapsulated in a series of 'layers'. Just like the many layers of clothing on our bodies, these layers with endowed meanings often obstruct our understanding of the true essence of the object or space. With all these layers stripped away, we aim to design closer to the truth. And without being confused with Minimalism per se, we want to begin design with the absolute bare minimum of functions - call it 'Naked Design' or 'Extreme Functionalism'.

Ultimately, Naked Architecture and Naked Design are also about Innovation, Inventiveness and Creativity. We strive not to be hindered by existing doctrines and create an environment anew. Based on just a series of utilitarian requirements as a starting point, the design approach is to think holistically with a stronger emphasis on usage. Style is important but it should never be the initial framework for any project. Architecture to us is fundamentally a struggle to create a multi-functional, innovative environment that enhances the quality of living and create values inventively for our ever-evolving lifestyles. We see this extreme functional approach as emergent in the way of doing architecture and design in the foreseeable future.

In our office, we strongly believe the following: Each object or space is beautiful because it is meaningful; meaningful because it is functional; functional because it is useful - useful on an everyday basis.

Alexander Wong
August 2005



“

Each object or space is beautiful because it is meaningful; meaningful because it is functional; functional because it is useful - useful on an everyday basis.”

works

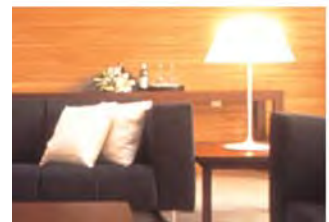
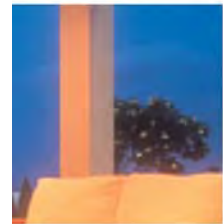
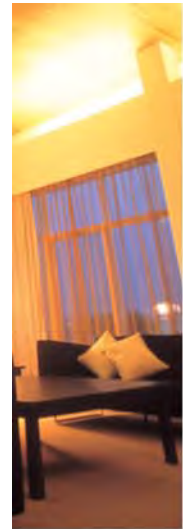
boatyard

Client:
Kingship Marine Limited

Location:
Zhong Shan, China

Floor Area:
100,000 Square Meters

Year Of Completion:
2004





The Architecture of



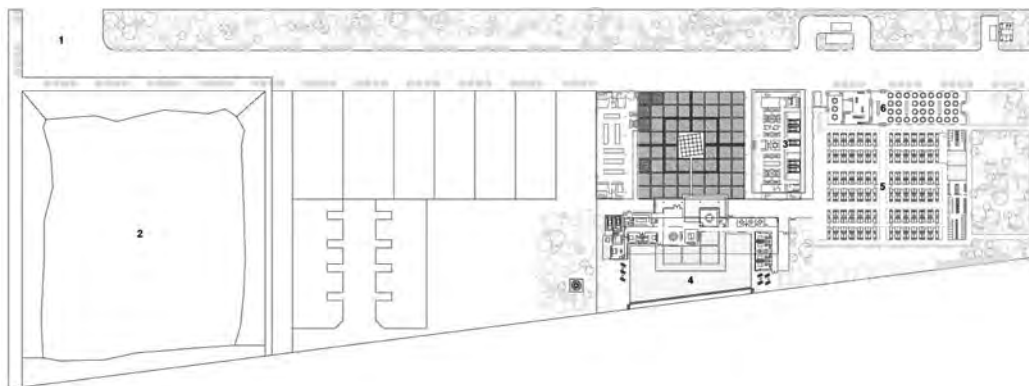
White



Spanning across an expansive area of 100,000 square meters, this exceptional shipyard for building luxury boats in Southern China is conceived as a quality campus with a series of distinct yet interrelated buildings. Each component has its own individual function and scale, but is fully-integrated in style and spirit with the rest of the industrial development.





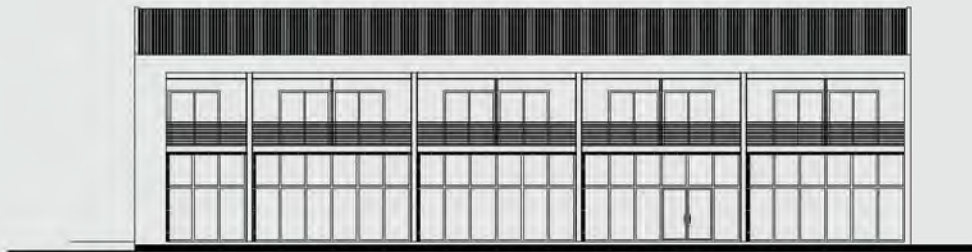


1. entrance
2. boat factory
3. office-dormitory
4. director's residence
5. workers' quarters
6. canteen





[This is not just another manufacturing plant, but rather, a special campus, a showcase to illustrate the future of industrial architecture for years to come....]







The office-dormitory block is, in essence, a modernist interpretation of an Italian Palazzo type but translated into a language based on the syntax of industrial glass and steel. It is a marriage between a modern white box and a traditional agrarian barn. The transparency of the western facade contrasts distinctly with the ribbon windows on the eastern elevation which can be perceived as a purist box as well.





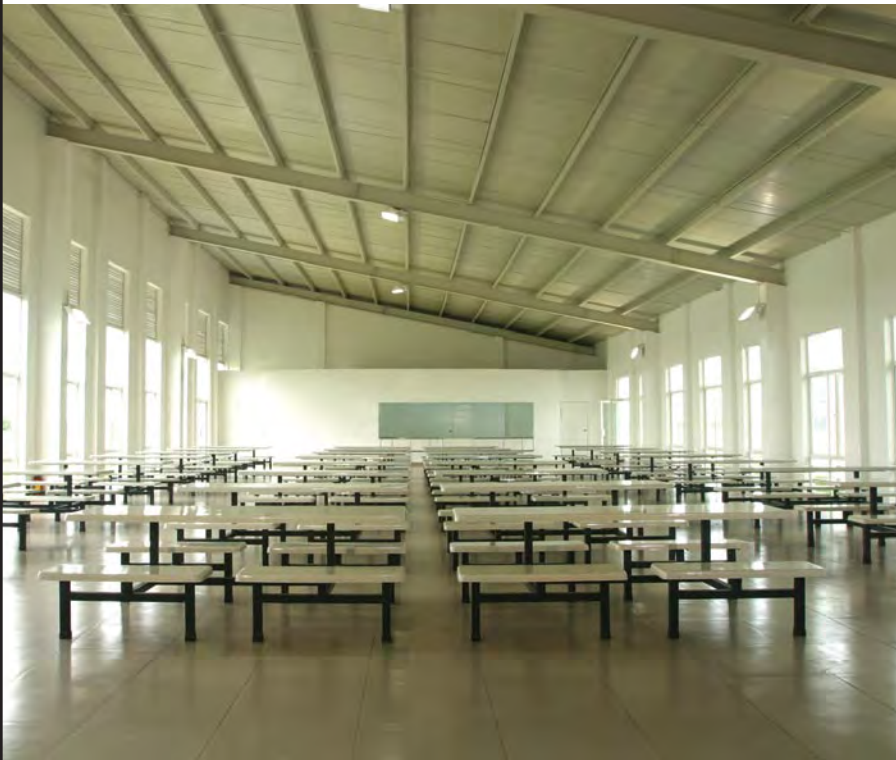
“Despite the fact that everything is white, pristine and modern-looking, it also has a kind of down-to-earth agrarian look so it wouldn't be sticking out like a sore thumb.”







The canteen is a large span structure which is agrarian in spirit but rationalist and collegiate (almost monastic) in style. As a center for workers to congregate, it embodies a strong feeling of community and is infused with a sense of dignified proportion.



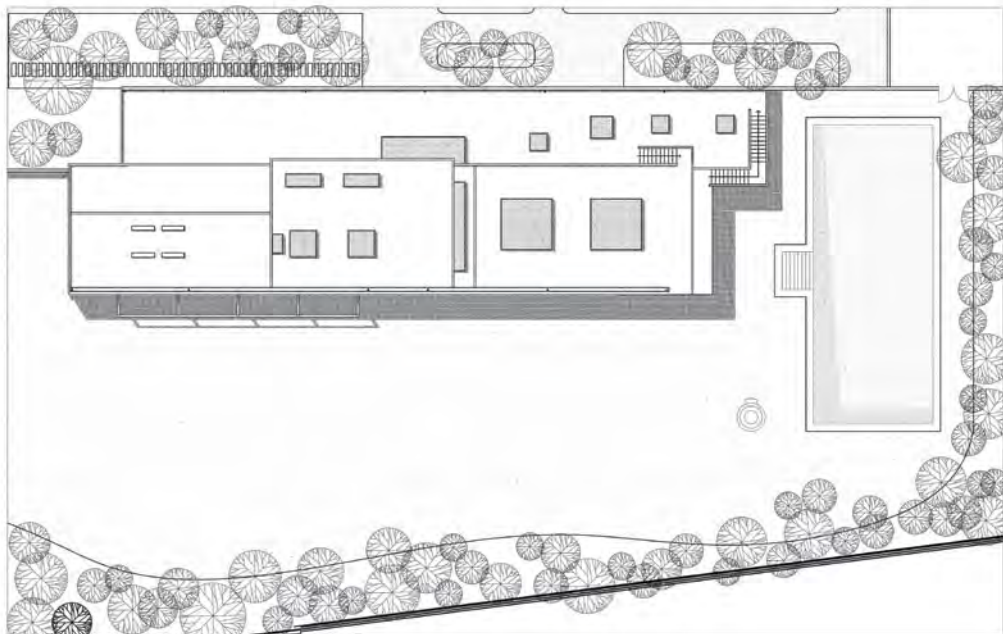
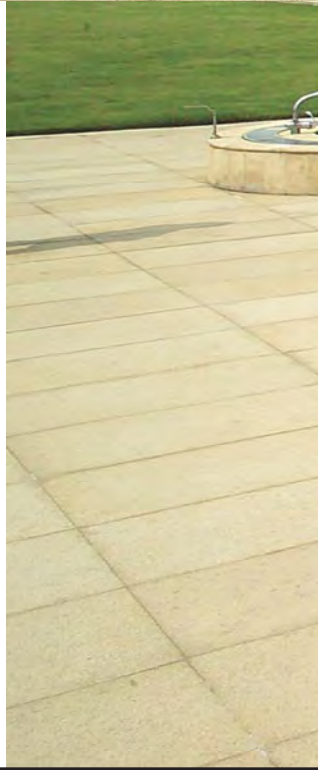
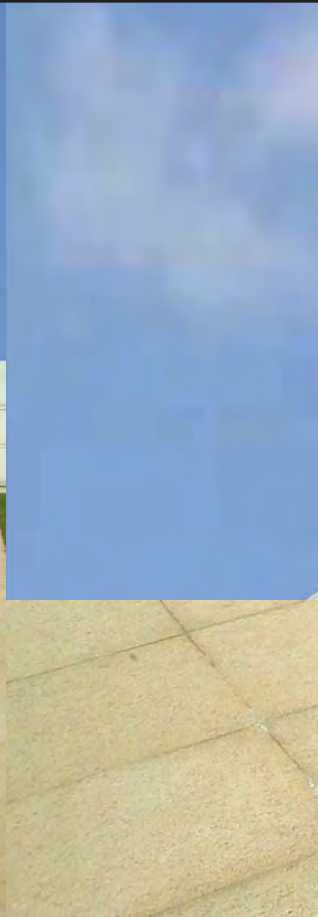


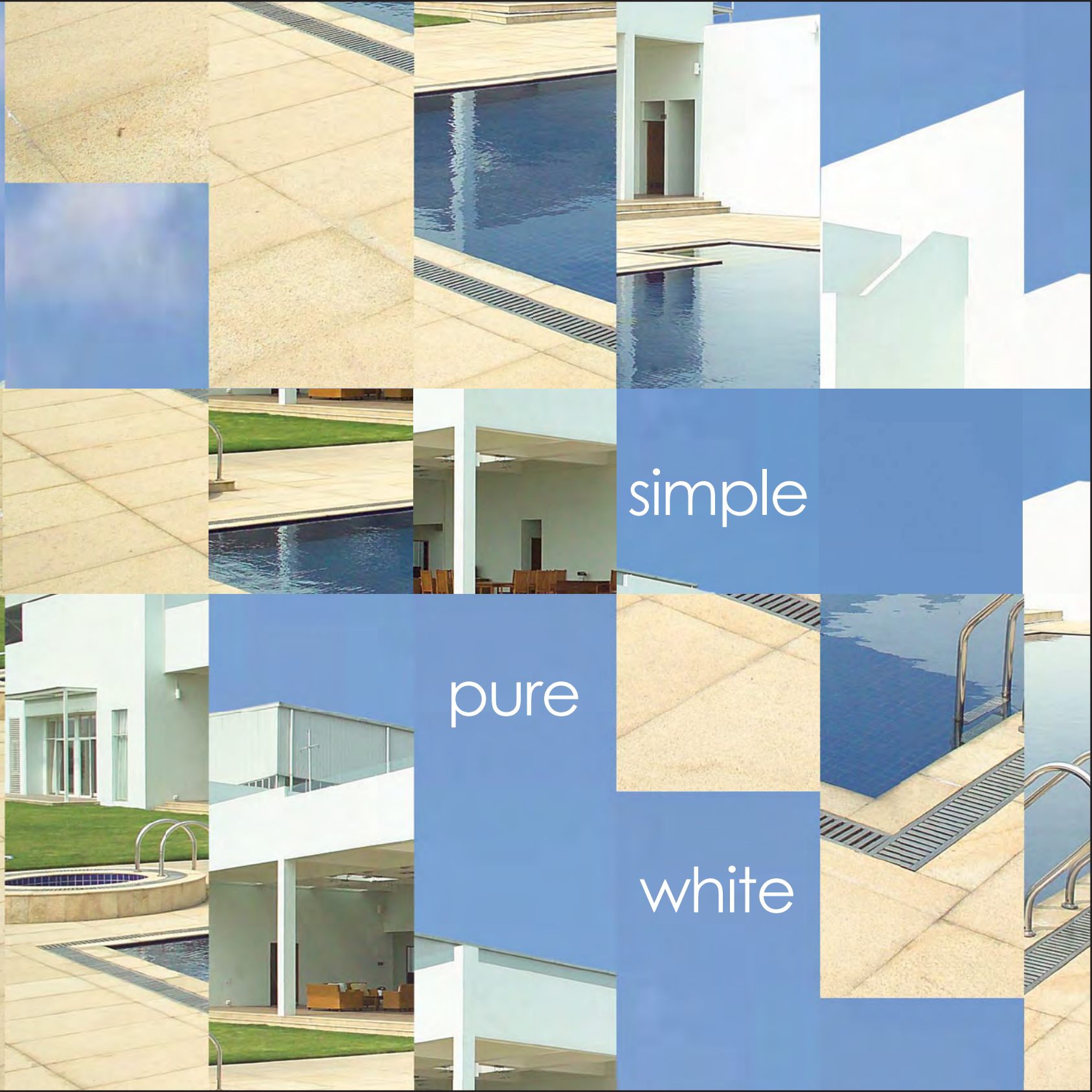


[I hope this look of being very simple is not in anyway simplistic. There is actually a lot of thought put into it. We are not pursuing Minimalism by any means....]

The quarters where the workers reside have become a purist rendition of the institutional archetype whilst the director's residence is a stately interpretation of an L.A. Pool House - a dialogue between spaces interior and exterior; an interplay between linear planes and surfaces, both reflective and introspective at the same time.







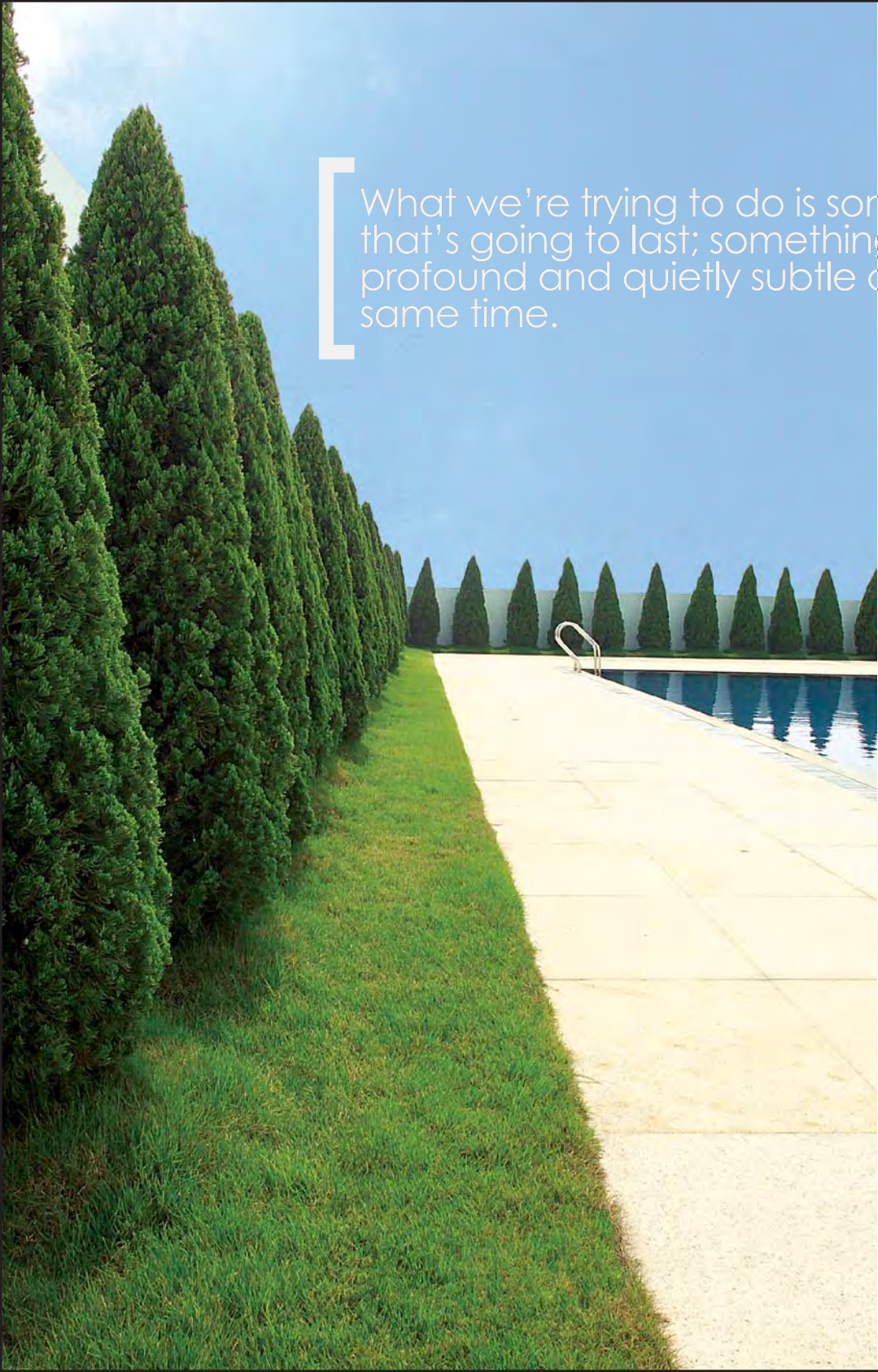
simple

pure

white



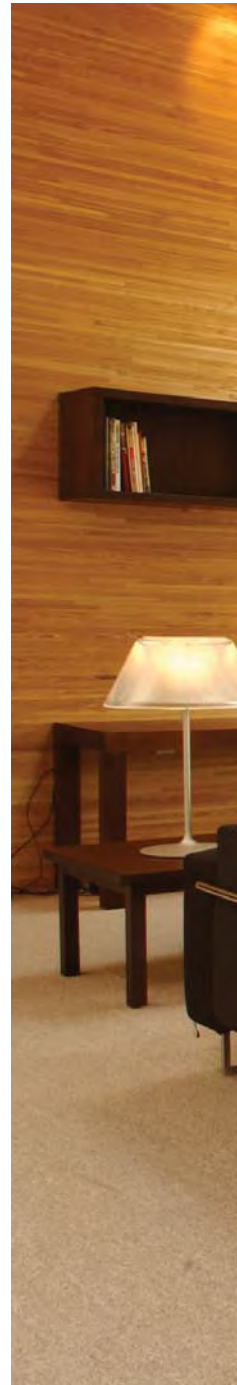




What we're trying to do is something that's going to last; something that's profound and quietly subtle at the same time.

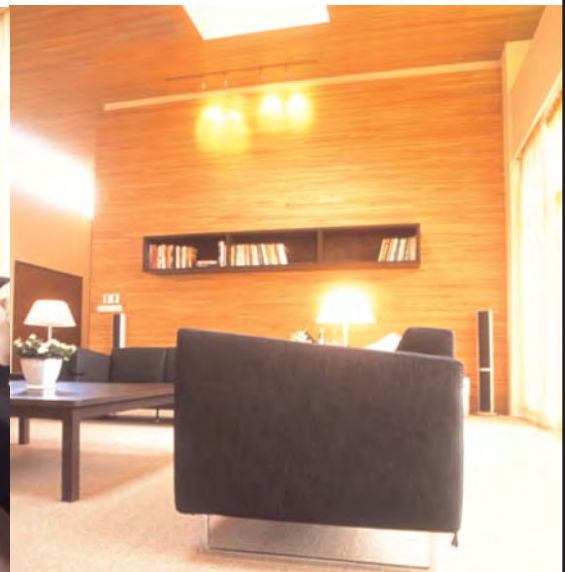
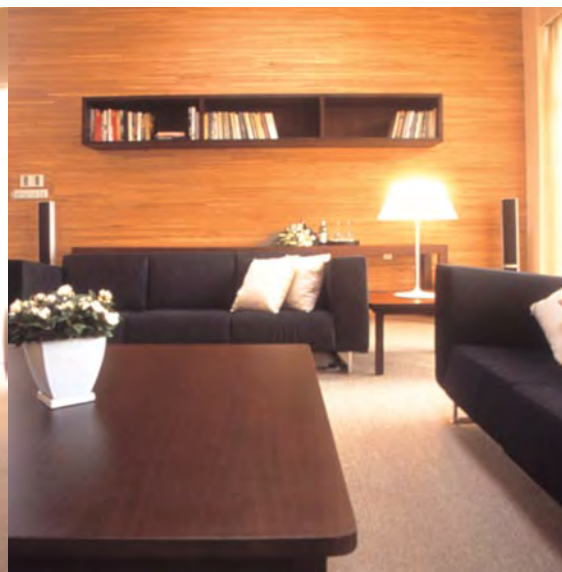


I think there is something almost sacred about Architecture; not only is it closely connected to our sense of belonging and our interpretation of reality, it also greatly influences our self-worth and even our sense of community as a whole....









[It's not the end when a building is completed....



[It's just the beginning....

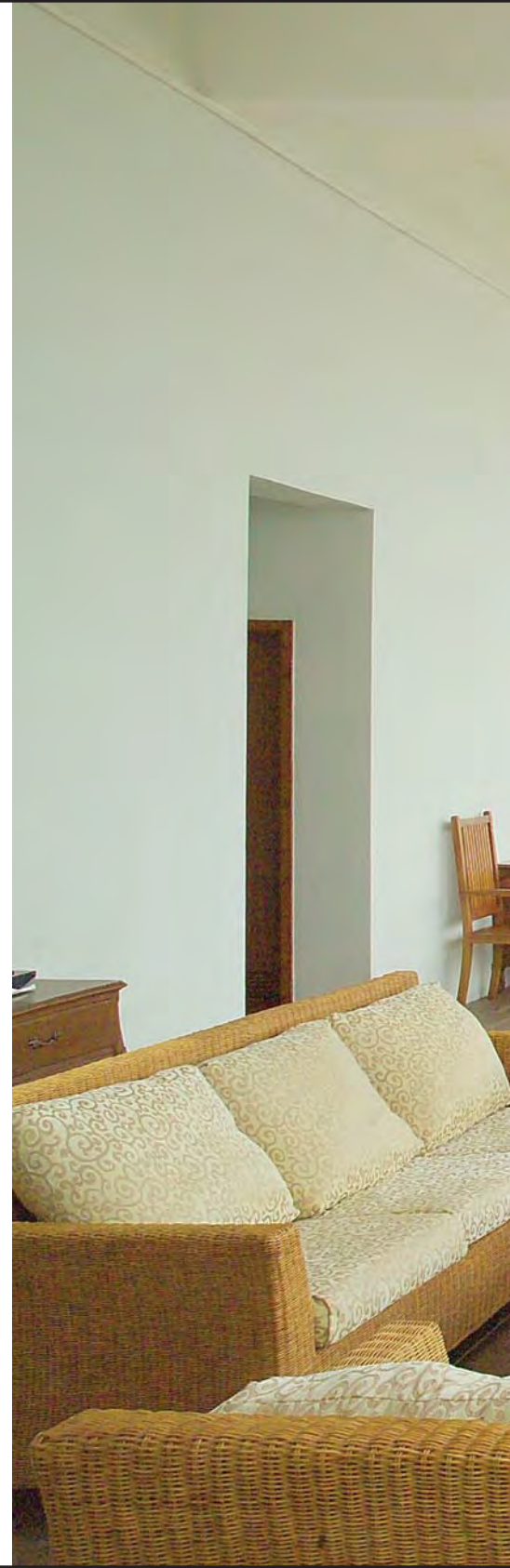




It's just the beginning...]

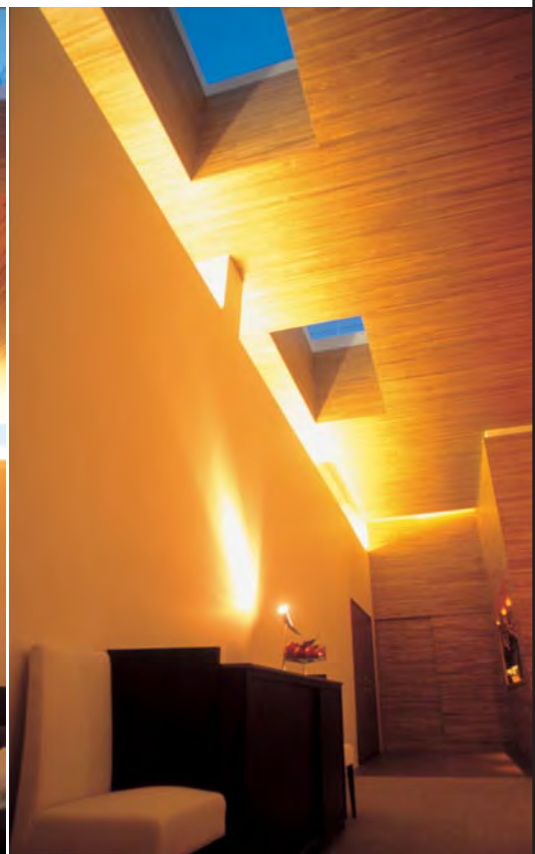


It's not the end when a building is completed...]













jehle house

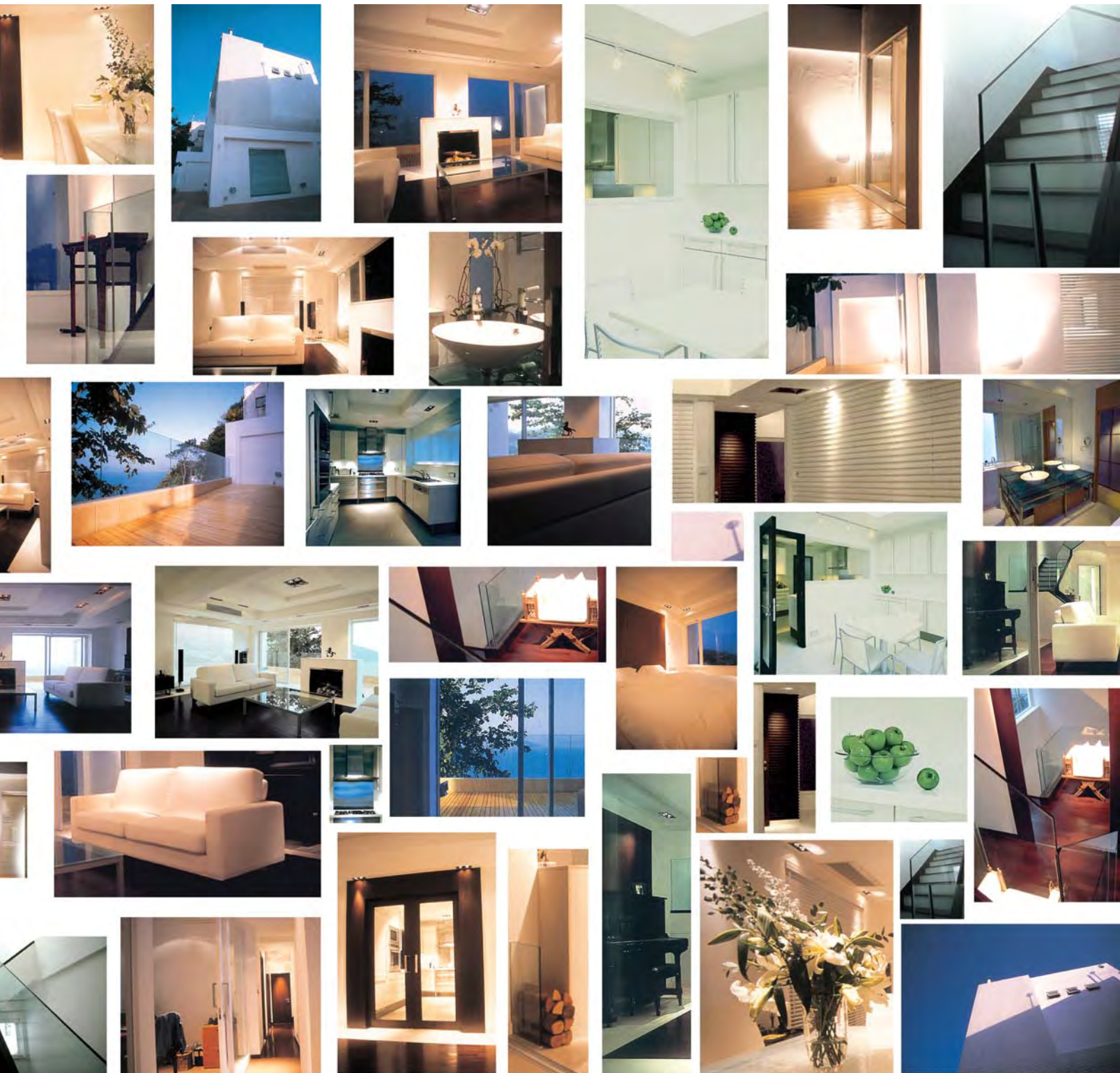
Client:
Philip Jehle & Rosanne Salazar Jehle

Location:
Clear Water Bay, Hong Kong

Floor Area:
600 Square Meters

Year Of Completion:
2001





“...a pure block in its natural surroundings...”

This tranquil, beautiful residence, is home to a Swiss couple. The building occupies a perfect location by the water which is perceived almost as a lake in Switzerland and each room commands a stunning, unobstructed view of the ocean. The design strategy is to create an environment maximizing the potential of all its natural surroundings whilst enhancing the client's lifestyle to its very fullest.







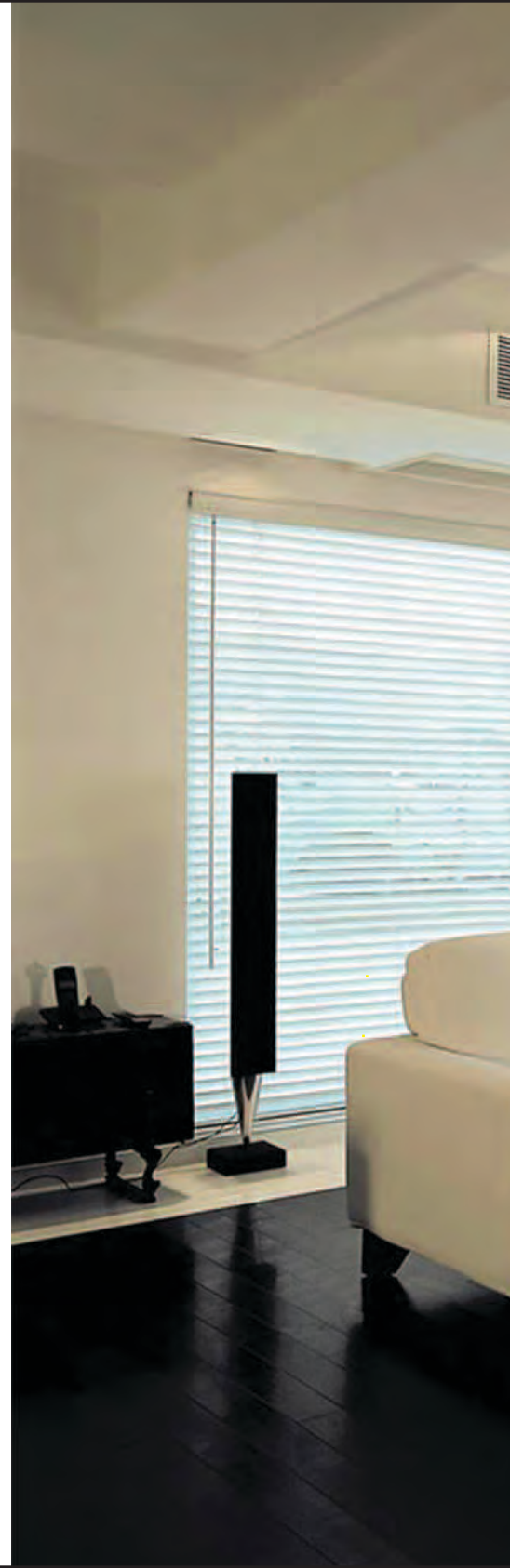
“ The emphasis here is to have the rhythm within synchronized with the one from Nature. ”



The house is created almost like a "Backdrop", with those living inside and out to take center stage. Keeping in line with our Naked Architecture approach, anything that is inflexible or over-designed have been avoided with meticulous care.



1. sun deck
2. living room
3. dining area
4. kitchen and breakfast room





“This house is conceived as a series of white spaces, flooded with natural light continuously throughout the day where one could feel in synch with nature.”

This all-encompassing experience is further enhanced by the skylight in the breakfast room, bringing oneself even closer to the natural light of its surroundings whilst experiencing the nuances of all the changing colors throughout the hours in terms of weather and seasons. The emphasis here is to have the rhythm within synchronized with the one from Nature.






“ a house with six layers starting from the kitchen culminating with a stunning view of the ocean.”











Here, the fireplace is deliberately against the backdrop of nature the fireplace and the view of the ocean, have been superimposed one on top of the other tension because of this pairing of fire and water; formality because of the reinforced foci in the same direction along a classical axis of centrality.











“ On plan, the ground level consists of six layers, starting from the kitchen, then the dining area, followed by the living area, the fire place, the sun deck, and finally culminating with a stunning view of the ocean. Here, the fireplace is deliberately not set against the wall but against a backdrop of nature. Thus these two powerful foci, the fireplace and the view of the ocean, have been superimposed one on top of the other, generating tension and formality simultaneously – tension because of this pairing of fire and water; formality because of the reinforced foci in the same direction along a classical axis of centrality. ”







“This house is conceived as a series of white spaces, flooded with natural light continuously throughout the day where one could feel in synch with nature.”



“ Each design intention is so 'pared-down' that nothing is just simplistic for the sake of being minimal. Every item has a purpose and a soul.... This innovative but restrained approach has resulted in an architecture that takes both understated functionalism and elegant proportions to new heights. Simple but dignified materials have been adopted to create an atmosphere of serenity that conform rigidly to a monochromatic palette.”





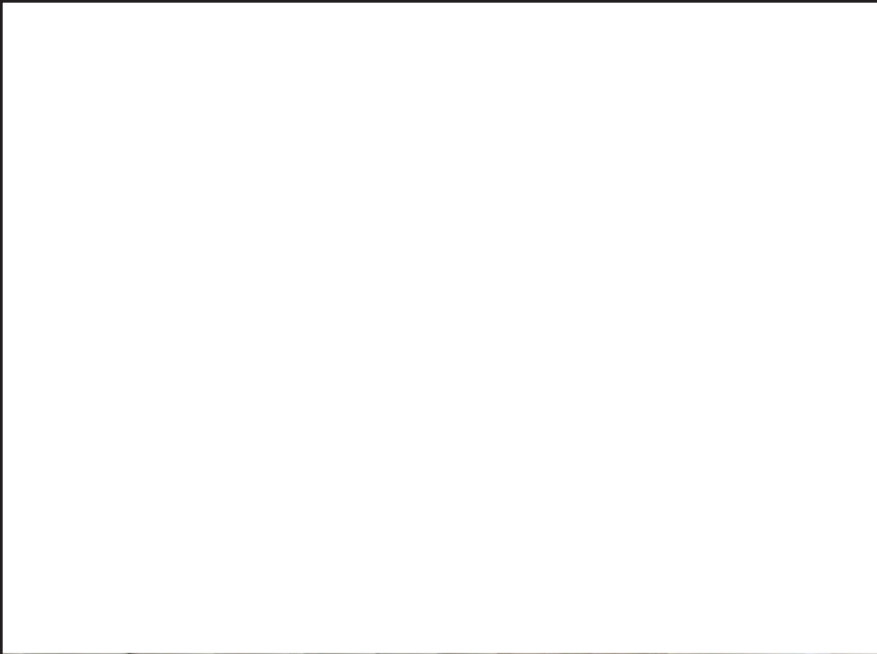




“

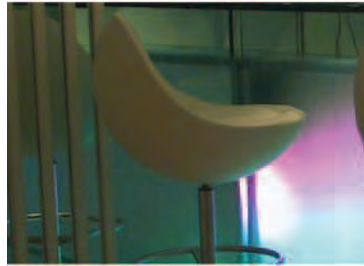
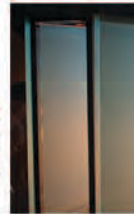
...a haven of peace and tranquility...

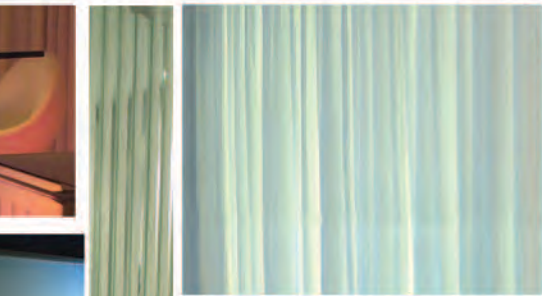
”

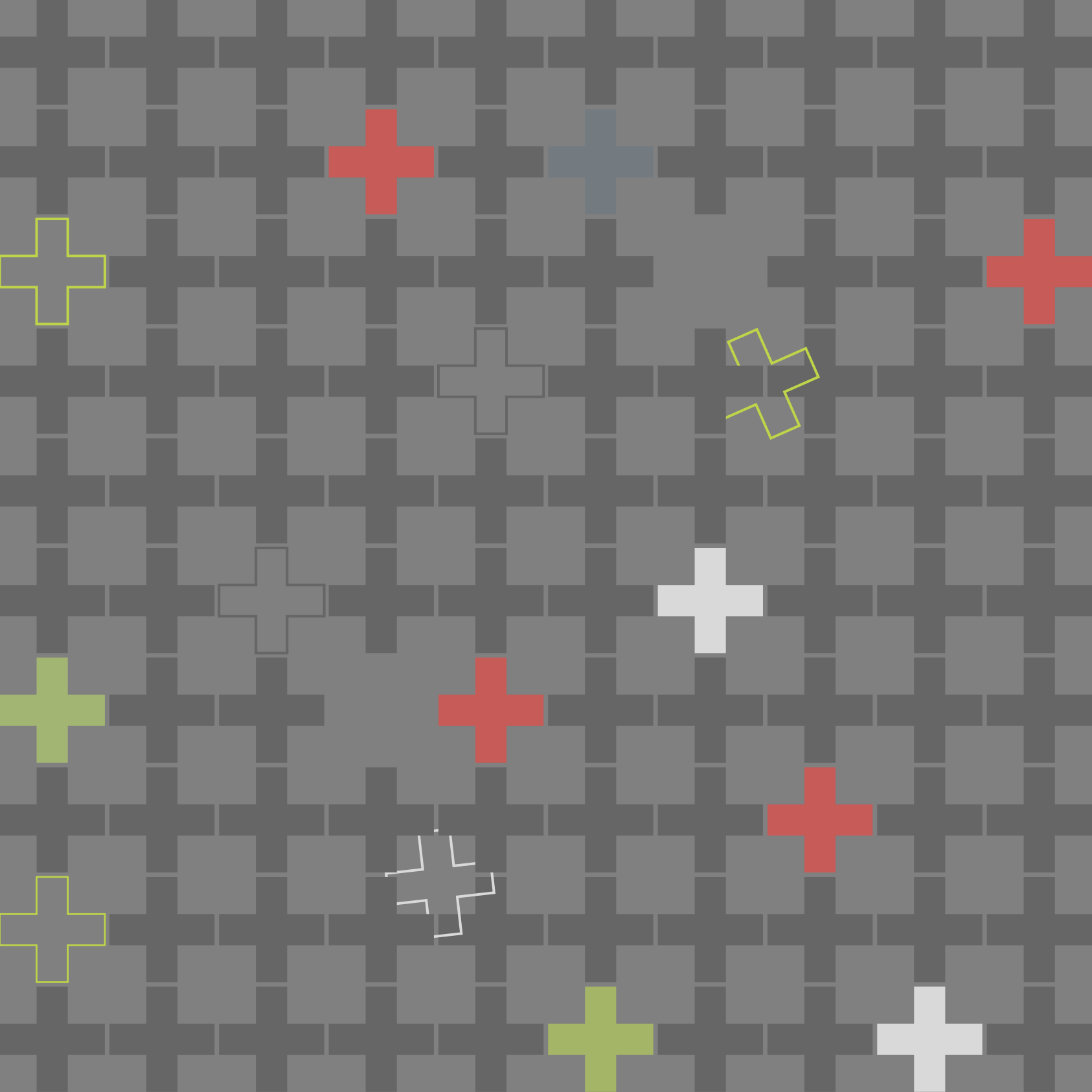


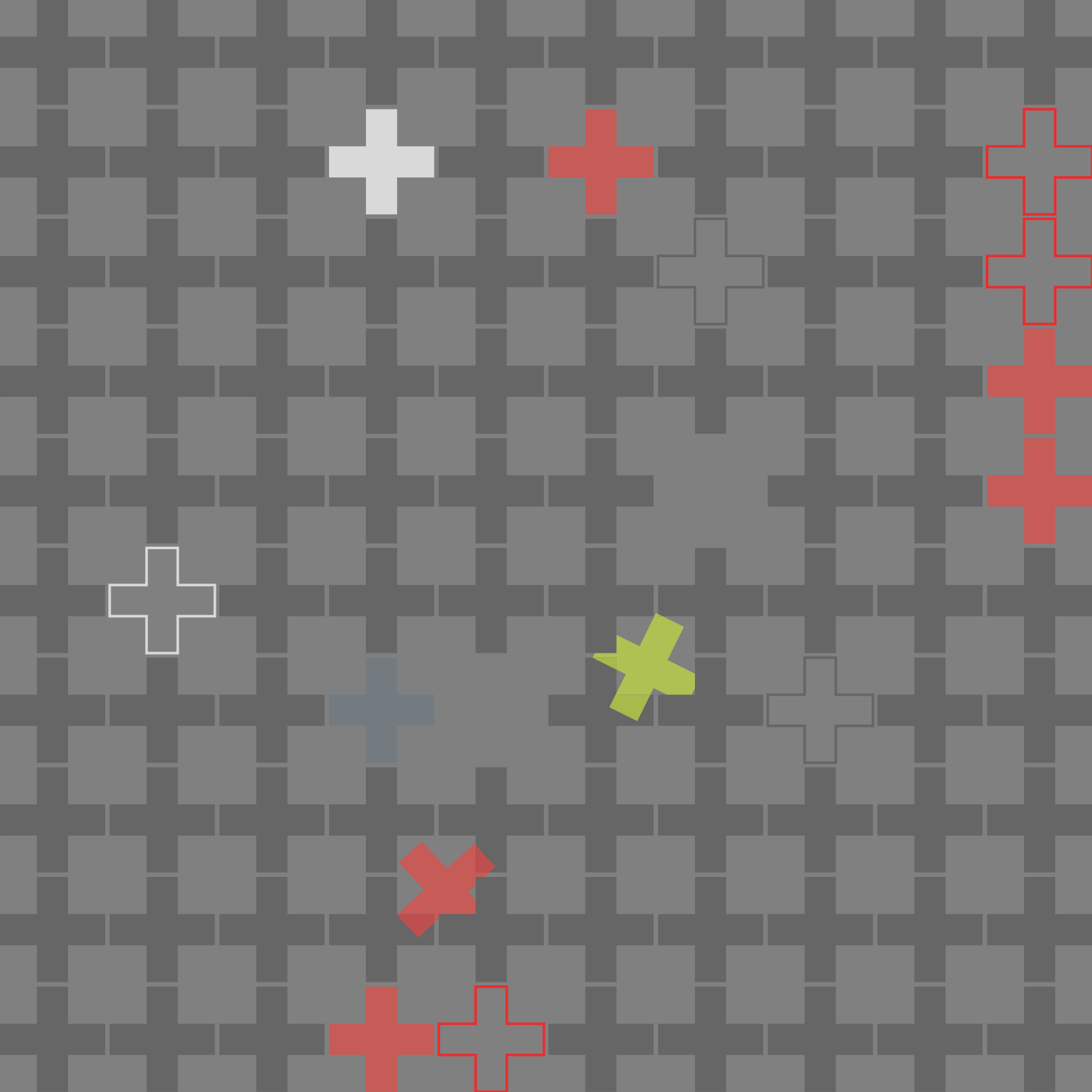
spa

Location:
Hong Kong
Floor Area:
200 Square Meters
Year Of Completion:
2001









NAKED

+

WHITE

Alexander Wong