

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

BY NAN-HIE IN

Three exhibitions showcasing the work of local architecture students demonstrate a high level of technical ability and highlight issues facing society

Archigram Meets Central exhibition showcases the work of more than 400 students from the architecture department of The University of Hong Kong

HANZI EXHIBITION
21.6-10.7.2018

Archigram Meets Central

pop-up store & book signing
present by kapok

June 30, 6 - 8pm | Marketplace, G/F, PMQ
July 8, 11am - 8pm | kapok PMQ, HG10

Archigram Meets Central
Nasrine Seraji, Professor and Head of Architecture Department, announces a first design educational event to announce a first design educational event

Exhibition period:
24th June - 8th July 2018: 12:00 pm - 6:00 pm
PMQ Marketplace and Courtyard

Sunday 24 June - 8 July 2018: 12pm-6pm
Exhibition opens to public

Sunday 24 June 2018, 2:30pm-5:30pm (RSVP)
Architectural workshop for family and kids
Venue: Marketplace PMQ
Quota: 20
Collaborative parties: 綠灣 Y Little Green Feet

*RSVP: <https://www.hkexpereencing.net/>

Monday 25 June 2018, 4:30pm-7pm
Discussion on Central and the Harbour
Venue: HUB (G10-T11), 7/F, Block A
Open to public



Make Some Noise, the theme of the Master of Architecture Graduation Show XXII

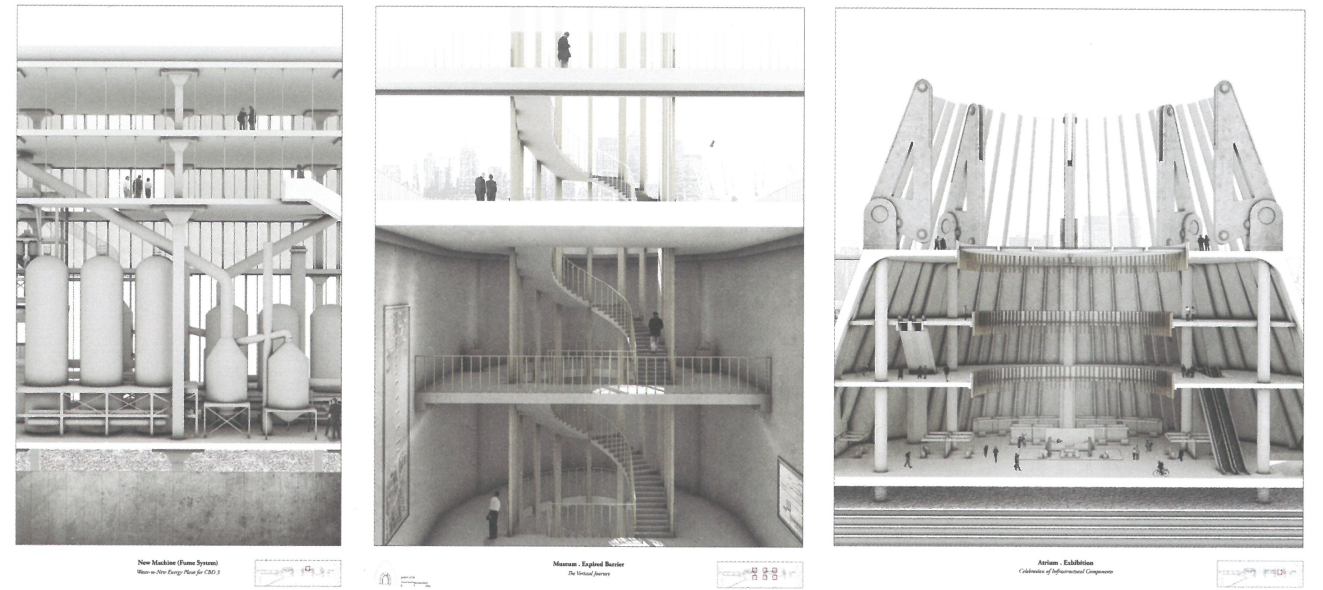
Earning a master's degree in architecture is no easy feat and those enrolled in The Chinese University of Hong Kong's School of Architecture programme are subject to additional scrutiny: their projects go on public display. This year's students had their work showcased at The Master of Architecture Graduation Show XXII in Exchange Square's Rotunda from early June, after which the exhibition was moved to the university for the rest of the month. More than 40 projects explored the

theme *Make Some Noise* that encouraged students to generate original – sometimes disruptive – architectural strategies in response to various societal issues.

"We aim not only to have our voices heard and presence felt, but ultimately to encourage society to express its needs and aspirations. We believe architecture can be a driving force for real social change," says Karen Kwok, President of the graduation show committee. Marvin Chen, President of the Hong Kong Institute of Architects, officiated at the event.



Organisers believe architecture is a force for social change

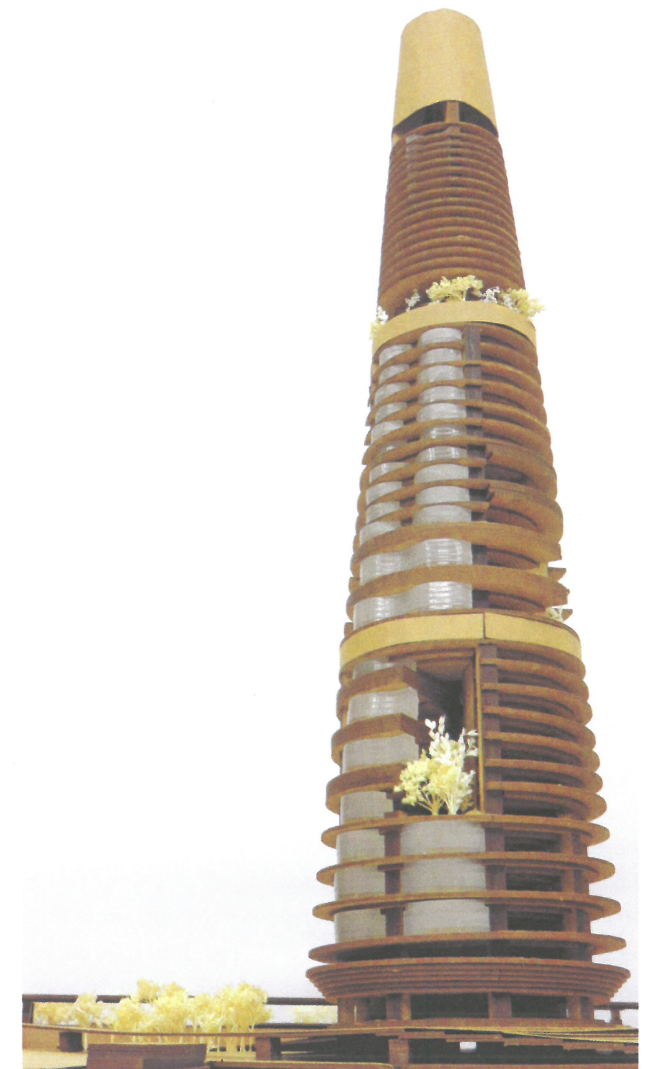


Derrick On U Leong's project transforms London's Thames Barrier in response to climate change

Original works include Lam Long-tat's reimagining of a typical Hong Kong funeral parlour as a less jarring experience. Lam designed a conical tower: dubbed *Fare.Well vertical healing*, it is Lam's response to the sometimes-impersonal funerals that take place in Hong Kong. His work is drawn on his observations at his grandmother's funeral, in addition to his research on local parlours.

His vision is a four-zoned tower that consolidates various rituals in one site while offering greater sensitivity, privacy and more to participants as they ascend the property, which includes a registry and mortuary zone on the ground floor, a funeral and cremation zone (each space would be buffered from one another) and a memorial site at the top.

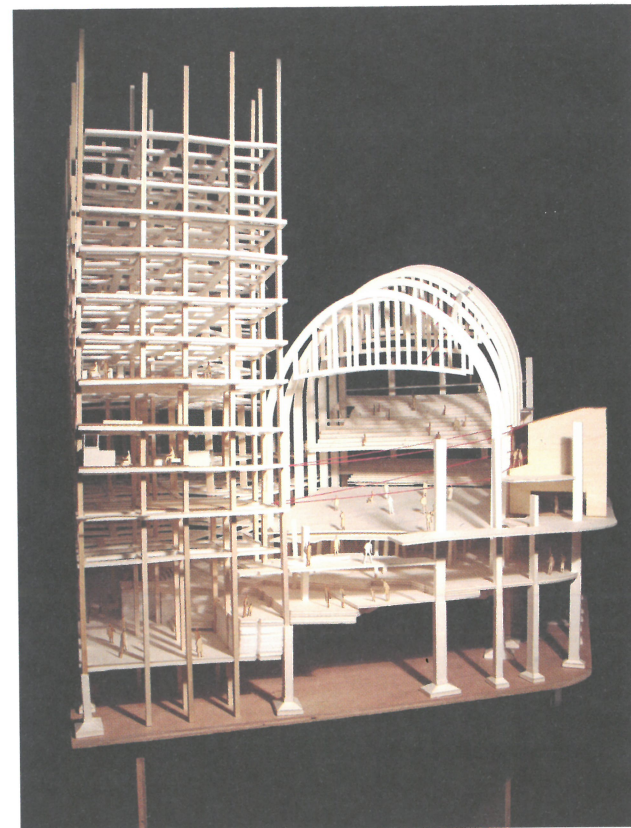
Some students focused their attention on dismantling and transforming sites overseas. Derrick On U Leong's submission titled *Crossing the Thames Barrier: Adaptive Reuse of Existing Infrastructure Under Climate Change* won the Best Thesis Project Award for his idea for a new incarnation of London's Thames Barrier. The existing structure stretches for half a kilometre across the Thames to protect Central London from floods. However, rising sea levels and the prospect of extreme and more frequent storms means the barrier may well be redundant by the middle of this century. Leong proposes to transform the structure into a pedestrian bridge, with areas that include a museum, a waste-to-energy plant and a venue that explores the issue of climate change. The project will be submitted to the Royal Institute of British Architects for consideration for a Student Silver Medal.



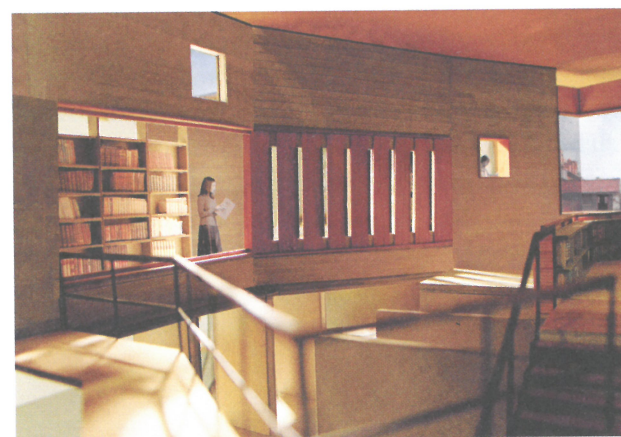
Lam Long-tat's *Fare.Well vertical healing* re-examines funerals

Improving existing sites with a conservationist strategy is also part of Wendy Cheung Hon-ting's project. She proposes to transform a 66-year-old heritage site in North Point with an approach inspired by the world of cinema. The State Theatre faced the wrecking ball two years ago until various groups fought for its survival; last year, the site earned Grade I heritage status. Cheung was fascinated by the site's story, its abandoned facilities and architectural characteristics, notably the dramatic parabolic roof and the fact that the complex also housed residences. Local filmmaker Fruit Chan shot scenes for *The Longest Summer* at the site in 1997. Cheung taps into the film's underlying theme: "It was shot with the theatre as a backdrop to show the chaotic situation of [Hong Kong at] that moment," she explains. Her thesis suggests details for various new public spaces and offers two paths to explore the premises – one route to showcase the residential side, another to showcase its history as a cinema. Features would include a 'capsule' area, where viewers could observe the bustle of King's Road.

Winnie Lam Wai-han's complex analysis and modelling work in *Reading Hub in Shanghai* explores the revitalisation of an abandoned market in Lilong, Shanghai. Her project employs a large-scale model-making technique to test ideas concerning the way visitors experience particular environments. Her work is a critique of contemporary architecture that is often all about form but places little value on how people use a space. Lam's research referenced Alvar Aalto's Villa Mairea in Finland plus Peter Zumthor's approach to produce models of sites at different scales to test ideas. Lam generated a 1:20 scale model of Villa Mairea to study Aalto's design principles and tested its spatial interaction with different light sources. She then applied this method to the Shanghai site using a model to imagine a bookstore, library, writing room, reading terrace and more. Insights gleaned from her Villa Mairea model were employed in her concept – notably a diagonal framework of spaces that would help control the flow of the building's users.



The State Theatre reworked by Wendy Cheung Hon-ting



Winnie Lam Wai-han's modelling tested how spaces are used



Zoe Zhang Guangning's *Freedomland* is a dystopian-themed freedom of speech amusement park in Central

The University of Hong Kong also put architectural master's degree thesis projects on display, at the institution's Knowles Building this summer. Industry experts were present at the event's opening day, while HKU's Department of Architecture professor Nasrine Seraji praised students' efforts for "carrying the messages of architecture forward" in an exhibition filled with projects that prompted much discourse on various societal issues.

Highlights include Yin Xiaoxiang's project *Solid Timber Subdivision Robotic Cutting Joints*, which proposes a system that tweaks a centuries-old Chinese timber roof system with the aid of robotic technology.

His work is a response to the deforestation crisis in China. "It's a revival of this craft because it is still related to this very old tradition – but with new look," says Yin.

His strategy adapts the *dougong* roof construction method into a modified interlocking system. After testing the timber joints, Yin discovered that transitioning from a stacking system to an interlocking one allows redundant components to be omitted without affecting the structure's stability. His model showed his remarkable concept in the form of a roof with smoother curves in a system supported by complex interlocking joints. Yin claims this result could only be achieved through precise and customised timber cutting thanks to robotics.



Yin Xiaoxiang used robotics to modify traditional Chinese timber roof construction techniques

Provocative ideas were prevalent at the exhibition, including those that focus on Hong Kong's politically charged climate. Zoe Zhang Guangning's *Freedomland* proposes an area in Central District for people to express themselves. The proposed venue, which would include Statue Square, is designed to encourage interaction and the free exchange of ideas by means of an entertainment programme. "Here, people are separated [at the first zones] for a chance to express themselves separately, then they are put back together [at areas further into the venue] to engage in conversations and debate around certain topics to get to a solution," explains Zhang. Books including *Delicious New York* (1978) by Rem Koolhaas shaped her project, including the Dutch architect's take on Brooklyn's Coney Island amusement park as a place to release tension for urbanites. "Freedomland is like Coney Island where people celebrate something they didn't have," says Zhang. The project, rendered in colourful imagery, includes a scaffolding-climbing park for spectators to scale, a newspaper factory-themed roller coaster to disseminate information or engage in debates, and a memorial garden to contemplate the truth about politics and current affairs.



Nasrine Seraji of HKU's Department of Architecture



Archigram Meets Central exhibition at PMQ, inspired by the radical British architectural collective of the 1960s

"IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE CONSTRUCTION OF BUILDINGS BUT CONSTRUCTION OF CULTURE, AND IT INITIATES DIALOGUE ABOUT SOCIETY"

Photo: Hannah Grogan

ARCHIGRAM REVISITED

The University of Hong Kong's Department of Architecture frequently stages events beyond the walls of the institution – such as presentations at Art Basel – but the department upped the ante this summer by hosting a large-scale and comprehensive exhibition at PMQ in Central for the first time. The event, entitled *Archigram Meets Central*, displayed the work of some 400 students from its undergraduate and master's programmes that touched on themes relating to Hong Kong's Central District and Harbourfront. The two-week exhibition was initiated and led by professor Seraji.

Archigram was a radical architectural collective formed in London in the 1960s, and some of its original members visited the PMQ event. The experimental group's past materials inspired works by HKU students, also showcased at the PMQ site.



The first-year students were tasked with translating their physique and posture into the form of a chair

Those works included the *Walking City* exhibit, inspired by Archigram's earlier concept of a reimagined metropolis in the form of a giant pod-like entity; students made a patchwork mosaic banner that was suspended across PMQ's Market Place premises. The installation instantly became a hotspot for selfies.

Another highlight was the work of HKU's first-year students, who were tasked with translating their physique and posture into the form of a chair. In all, more than 60 were made, one third of which were put on display. Various sizes and forms each reflected the state of mind of the respective student, and the display was a hit among spectators

young and old who sat on and played with the chairs.

The event also sought to engage with the rest of the community by facilitating discourse and awareness about topical architectural themes in Hong Kong. This was achieved through talks and workshops staged at PMQ and the university. For example, HKU worked with the Little Green Feet educational club to help youngsters build a model.

Other subsidiary events in support of this exhibition included an Archigram Symposium at HKU's Graduate House, where surviving members of Archigram, including British architects Peter Cook and Dennis Crompton, presented their concepts to a highly attentive audience.



Student work at PMQ aimed to engage the public and provoke community dialogue about society

Back at PMQ, the organisers hosted talks featuring speakers from government and non-governmental organisations on themes such as Central's preservation, reappropriation and future. The development of Central and Hong Kong's waterfront areas is often controversial, as reclamation and destruction of public space continues to spark outcry. The demolition of the original Star Ferry pier in Central was one such example. The students' study of architectural issues in Central and on the Harbourfront took five themes, including technology and robotics; ecologies, sustainabilities and regeneration; living cities and rural; and politics, art and the media.

However, it's not solely about the work of students: One important goal of the exhibition, according to Jae Hyun Lim, a senior lecturer at HKU's Department of Architecture, is to engage members of the community and highlight the problems the city faces. "It's not just about the construction of buildings, but construction of culture and it initiates dialogue about society," says Lim. A member of the event's curating team, he believes that to some extent the exhibition had met those goals, given the positive response to the show. ■

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