

The Spatial Exchange

Speakers:

Dong-Ping Wong, Architect and Founding Director of Food New York

Jaffa Lam, Chinese Visual Artist

Ikko Yokoyama, Senior Curator, M+

[Text on screen]

THE EXCHANGE

THE SPATIAL EXCHANGE

Episode 5

CREATED BY

AD GQ with HSBC

Cities are changing faster than ever, inspiring a deeper commitment to nurture the unique identities of neighbourhoods.

During Hong Kong Art Week, we connected a Hong Kong-based artist with a New York-based architect, to translate local narratives into spatial forms, exploring how culture can be preserved in urban environments.

[Text on screen]

HONG KONG

Dong-Ping Wong

Architect

[Dong-Ping]

My name's Dong-Ping Wong I'm an architect and founding director of Food New York. My family's from Hong Kong. I grew up going to Hong Kong a lot. It feels like a city that evolved really gradually. There's residential on top of commercial, on top of like laundry piles, on top of restaurants. Everything is sort of added on and added on, in these small moments that result in this much larger city.

I think Hong Kong has a kind of limited set of space in the very similar way that Manhattan does.

Not only is there an eastern and western bridge in both Chinatown and Hong Kong, there's all these outside economic pressures that are asking it to change.

There's cultural factors that are trying to keep it what it is, and how do you balance those two things, either through design or through community engagement.

[Text on screen]

Jaffa Lam

Artist

[Jaffa]

I'm Jaffa Lam. I'm based in Hong Kong doing sculptural installations.

The organisation I work with is the Hong Kong Women Workers' Association. Our collaboration has been 16 years now.

The neighbourhood of the city inspires my work in different ways. Those fabrics were trimmed from the abandoned umbrellas from the street.

Workers will wash them with their recycled oil to become like a clean fabric.

Before I start to make my work, I know what I'm going to do. But when I'm doing my work, my hand will let me know the way to go.

[Text on screen]

Jaffa and Dong-Ping take inspiration from the city's cultural and commercial institutions.

M+ Museum

Ikko Yokoyama
Senior Curator, M+

[Ikko]

My name is Ikko Yokoyama, Senior Curator and Head of Design and Architecture. The mission of M+ is dedicated to nurturing and enhancing Asia's first global museum of contemporary visual culture.

Working together with HSBC, we are able to ensure that Hong Kong's cultural voice is grounded in community while giving it space on the global stage.

[Jaffa]

Hello!

[Dong-Ping]

So nice to finally meet you.

[Jaffa]

Yeah, finally.

[Dong-Ping]

How are you?

[Jaffa]

I'm good.

[Dong-Ping]

I've been wanting to come to this building forever.

[Jaffa]

First time?

[Dong-Ping]

Yeah, first time seeing it.

I mean it's pretty incredible.

[Jaffa]

Yeah.

[Dong-Ping]

For M+, the facade of the building is the first thing you see. So immediately you get that sense of space when you approach.

It's such a huge site.

You need something to kind of bring you back to this intimate level, and the green sort of bamboo-ish looking tile really does that.

[Jaffa]

I came to Hong Kong in 1985, when HSBC building built at the same year.

[Text on screen]

HSBC MAIN BUILDING

[Jaffa]

The building itself, it can breathe. The air can go through. The sunshine can get through the building. That's what I like.

[Dong-Ping]

It's made up of all these individual structural members, pipes, beams, cabling. And each of those is still really represented and individuated in the facade and on the interior.

The work I wanted to bring in with Jaffa was trying to represent this side of Hong Kong, best represented by the HSBC building, which is technical, I suppose, very kind of industrial, very repetitive.

So Jaffa, I'd seen some of your work with your fabric, but I never understood what the background of it, why you were using fabric so much.

[Jaffa]

Ok, I show you the secret.

[Dong-Ping]

Ok.

[Jaffa]

You see this umbrella and it's full of so many different colours.

[Dong-Ping]

Yeah.

[Jaffa]

But we cut one by one,

[Dong-Ping]

And you layer them together?

[Jaffa]

Yes.

[Dong-Ping]

Ok.

[Jaffa]

And then fold it.

[Dong-Ping]

It feels very, like, structural.

[Jaffa]

I think the cities are built by like the peoples, rather than the buildings. I know you are working on buildings.

[Dong-Ping]

No, it's perfect. Yes.

It already looks quite architectural.

[Jaffa]

Yeah, is it?

[Dong-Ping]

How you've layered it.

What you described is basically one half of my understanding of Hong Kong. It's very much people and the neighbourhoods and the family that's here, and it's very handmade. But the other half of Hong Kong, for me, is very much like the mass produced, very commercial side you see in the subway system, you see in all the buildings, in the skyline.

And so I really wanted to contrast the fabric with... I was thinking something like quite shiny and hard.

So I was like, could we use something that every piece is the same?

But it conceptually, but quite literally, would also reflect the colours coming off of your fabric. But it kind of feels like an intersection now. You're sort of moving your way through neighbourhoods in the city.

[Jaffa]

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[Dong-Ping]

And seeing all your pieces.

[Jaffa]

Most of my installation work reacts and dances with the space. I just follow and listen to my partners.

[Dong-Ping]

Standing in a space, looking at these pieces in person for the first time together, I think both Jaffa and I are really particular. We're like, "Oh half an inch to the left is exactly, ooh, ok, move it back a quarter inch to the right."

Seeing how Jaffa worked, and seeing how successful it was to work with her, I think opens up the possibility for me anyway where even when it's an architecture, for a really large audience, that you have to come with a personal side to it.

[Jaffa]

Working with Dong-Ping Wong, I saw the city of Hong Kong through fresh eyes. It gave me a new perspective.

That's the real meaning of The Exchange.

[Text on screen]

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