

PERSPECTIVE

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"The dialogue between client and architect is about as intimate as any conversation you can have, because when you're talking about building a house, you're talking about dreams" — Robert AM Stern

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DESIGN STARS OF TOMORROW





Above Annette Chu and Manfred Yuen

Nurturing the future

A global network of young talents is blooming, writes Hong Kong architect Annette Chu, reporting from Selinunte

PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF EUREKA/YS GROUNDWORK

The recent 'Architects Meet in Selinunte – Perspectives for the Next Future' event, organised by the Italian Architecture and Critique Association (AIAC), comprised three intensive days of meetings, sea breezes, heated debates and Italian delicacies. The AIAC selected 30 international young architects to participate, including myself and Manfred Yuen of YS Groundwork.

Set against the spectacular backdrop of Selinunte, a remote and beautiful area in Sicily, the symposium was a sequel to the event held at the Venice Biennale last August. Teams of young talents flew in from all around the world: Austria, Belgium, Dominican Republic, France, Hong Kong, Israel, India, Korea, Malta, Mexico, Poland, the Netherlands, Taiwan, Spain and Ukraine.

Under three major themes – New Simplicity, Ecology, Post Digital, (Dis)identity, and Social Engagement and Back to Politics, the young architects presented their works and engaged in roundtable discussions. The keynote speakers were Daniel Libeskind, James Wines and Neil Lynch, who led each day's topic and provoked questions and debate.

The contrasting architectural approaches observed throughout the above keynote sessions were stimulating. Contrasting with the mostly realised and site-driven projects presented by the young architects, Lynch demonstrated how his highly digitalised design approach relies on geometrical computation and thus creates a series of pre-fabricated, structure-driven environments. Inside a cathedral, Libeskind presented his worldwide projects and how they were formed and linked to his own constantly changing self-identity – this was juxtaposed against the very 'democratic' designs presented by two young European architects, which were essentially responses to the public's needs at the expenses of their own architectural identities. Given time, when a young architect arrives at stardom, to what extent would his or her personal language/identity be carved into the design, I wondered.



The strongest similarities in position were found when Wines shared his story about how he went from successful sculptor to architect engaged in social and environmental issues – indeed, social engagement was a theme that was echoed in many presentations from the young architects.

Under the topic (Dis)identity on behalf of Eureka and YS Groundwork, my presentation highlighted the 'face-lifting' of buildings in Hong Kong and China. Regardless of scale, we suggested that architecture in China (or in Asian cities where economy puts a strong force on architecture) could be reduced to 'cosmetic treatment'. Is this a result of saturation (Hong Kong) or a heated real estate market (China)? In presenting our projects, we hoped to show and reflect how we react to these two unique urban scenarios.

In Hong Kong, to bulldoze a project and build a new one is often difficult. Inevitably, we need to work with existing building envelopes. The projects I presented – Pal-edioscope, Code I, Off-white House, Vice-Versa and the interior proposal of a columbarium – showed how design, even in 2D, attempts to react to context and change the experience of people.

YS Groundwork's projects, both located in northern China, included a masterplan for the real estate project, in which the breaking down of the mass of a building by elevation treatments was demonstrated. In a residential development sales office project, the entire residential development was collapsed into a microcosmic world that animated the dream homes to potential buyers. It is no coincidence that both projects are real estate-related and this raised the ultimate question: is real estate development the cradle of good architects in Asia?

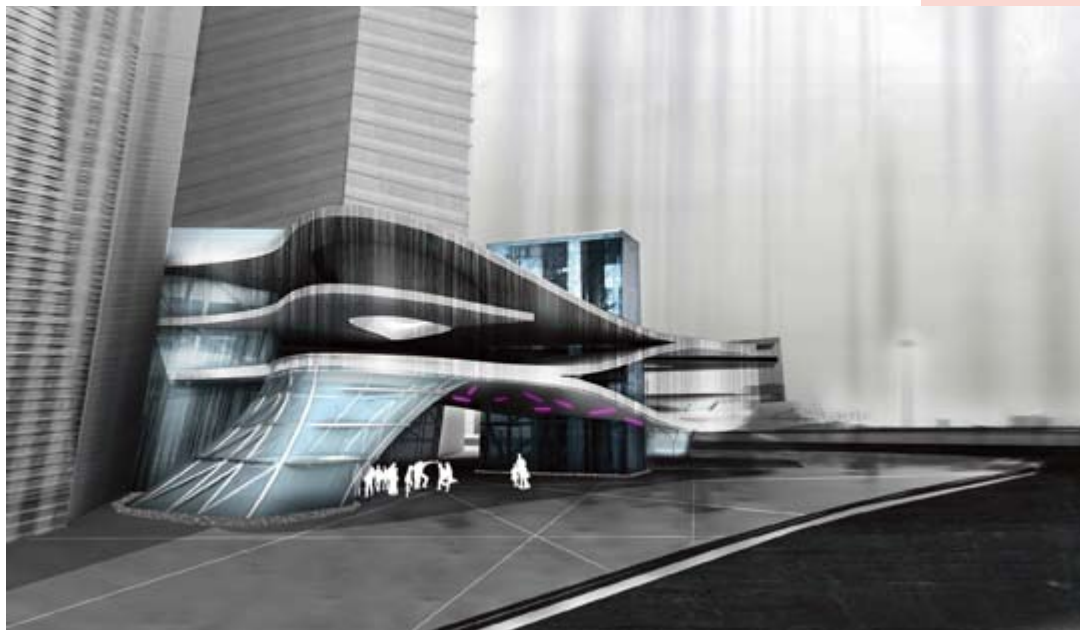
Returning to Hong Kong, I looked at the city with fresh eyes. In Selinunte, the presentations stirred up controversies and debate about architecture, and also offered insight into our peers, hints of possible dangers and opportunities for future architectural practices. The career journeys which young architects undertake are long and we need fellowship and a shared pool of knowledge. The biggest gift from the symposium is the establishment of global network between us, which will surely keep expanding in the future.

Annette Chu launched her own studio in 2007 and is currently a director of Eureka, which she co-founded with Raymond Leung in 2011. She has also lectured at Hong Kong University Space since 2008. Manfred Yuen set up YS Groundwork Architecture + Urbanism with Stephen Suen in 2007-08, and with Chu, recently launched The Blue Eyes Entity, a voluntary group that encourages architects to leave their computers once in a while and serve the community.

播種未來

香港建築師 Annette Chu 於意大利 Selinunte 現場報導：當地正蘊釀一股國際化的年輕設計力量

攝影：由 EUREKA/YS GROUNDWORK 提供



最近 Italian Architecture and Critique Association (AIAC) 舉辦為期三日的 Architects Meet in Selinunte - Perspectives for the Next Future 活動，在海風與意大利佳釀中，度過了密集的會議與熱烈的辯論。AIAC 挑選了三十名來自世界各地的年輕建築師參與今次盛事，當中包括我自己與 YS Groundwork 的 Manfred Yuen。

Selinunte 位於西西里島美麗的偏遠一角，而這片景色怡人的土地正是這次座談會的舉行場地。座談會是去年八月威尼斯雙年展一項活動的後續篇，而參與座談會的一眾年輕才俊則是來自世界各地，包括奧地利、比利時、多明尼加共和國、法國、香港、以色列、印度、韓國、馬爾他、墨西哥、波蘭、荷蘭、台灣、西班牙與烏克蘭。座談會環繞三大主題，包括「新派簡約主義」、「生態學、後數碼年代、(反)個人定位與社會參與」，以及「重回政治」。一眾年輕建築師就此三大主題解說各自的建築項目，並進行圓桌討論。Daniel Libeskind、James Wines 與 Neil Lynch 為大會的主講嘉賓，他們帶領討論每天的議題，提出問題並引發辯論。

上述主講嘉賓提到的建築手法形成鮮明的落差對比，激發思考討論。Z+O 的設計手法高度數碼化，他談到其設計如何依幾何數值計算，創造出一系列以結構為本的預製環境，而這便與大多年輕建築師過去以地點為本的建築項目大相逕庭。

另一方面，Daniel 在一座大教堂內講述他在全球各地的項目，談及這些項目如何成形、如何聯繫到他變更不斷的個人定位；兩名年輕歐洲建築師則談到其非常大眾化的設計，在回應大眾需要時便遺失了他們的個人建築意念定位，這便與 Daniel 的設計形成並列對比。我很想知道，當年輕建築師在日後成為殿堂級建築師後，其設計究竟會刻有多少個人定位風格。

主講嘉賓與年輕建築師最為相似的意念，出現於 Carlo 所分享的自身故事之中。他講述自己如何從成功的雕刻家轉型為關注社會與環境保護的建築師。而的確，很多年輕建築師亦談到社會參與這個課題。

我代表 Eureka 與 YS Groundwork 就 (反)個人定位這個主題作演講，而我的演講便突顯出香港與中國區內「外牆翻新」的現象。不論規模，我們建議在中國，以至一些由經濟大力推動建築發展的亞洲城市，建築都可降至「修繕外牆」的層面。在香港，這是由於發展已飽和，而在中國，這便因為房地產市場過熱。我們希望透過說明我們的項目，可以展現反映出我們如何應對這兩個獨特的都市現象。

在香港，要把大樓整座推倒重建往往很難，故此，我們時常要依固有大樓的結構來設計。我談到的項目，包括 Pal-Edioscope / Code 1 / Off-White House / Vice-Versa 與一個骨灰龕場的室內設計建議項目，都展現出就算是一維設計，都可

嘗試與四周環境互動呼應，並改變人們的體驗。

YS Groundwork 的兩個項目都位於中國北部。其中一個是房地產項目的總體規劃，透過外牆修繕翻新把大樓的體積分拆。而一個住宅發展銷售辦公室的項目，便把整個住宅發展項目濃縮在內，向潛在買家展現出各個夢想家居。這兩個項目都與房地產有關實在並非偶然，而這便引伸出一個根本問題：亞洲的房地產發展可孕育出卓越的建築師嗎？

回到香港，我以新視野去看這個城市。在 Selinunte，各人的演講觸發環境建築的爭議辯論，同時亦讓我們能窺探同儕的思維，暗示出在未來從事建築的潛在危機與機遇。年輕建築師開展事業要走很長的路，而我們在這趟旅程中需要夥伴，亦需要互相分享知識與心得。座談會中最大的得著，就是在同儕間建立出國際人際網絡，而在往後的日子裡，這個網絡定然會越發擴展。

Annette Chu 在零七年開設其個人工作室，並於今年與 Raymond Leung 共同創辦了 Eureka。Annette 現為 Eureka 的董事，而自零八年起亦於香港大學專業進修學院任教。Manfred Yuen 於零七至零八年期間與 Stephen Suen 創立 YS Groundwork Architecture + Urbanism，並與 Annette 攜手創辦 The Blue Eyes Entity 義工團體，鼓勵建築師能忙裡偷閒，服務社會。