

9394.06km – Twin Design Research Studios



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Queen of Belgium opens “9394.06km – Twin Design Research Studios” at BoDW 2013.

On 5 December, in a shower of flashlights, Her Majesty Queen Mathilde of Belgium opened the exhibition of project “9394.06km – Twin Design Research Studios” in the “House of the Belgian Spirit” during the Business of Design Week 2013 (BoDW). This project, curated by Assistant Professor Kristof Crolla of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, covers an architectural academic collaboration between six Belgian and Hong Kong Architecture Schools & Universities. By teaming up these academic institutes and having them in parallel explore architectural and urban design solutions for Hong Kong and Shenzhen, the project aims to both trigger a constructive, cross-cultural debate, as well as promote alternative visions for the challenges faced in the Asia Pacific region. Following the 3 day exhibition at BoDW, the project is currently on display at the Hong Kong 2013 Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture.



9394.06km Twin Design Research Studio - Exhibited at the 2013 Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism \ Architecture Hong Kong.

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Three design briefs were developed in response to the statement that the 21st century city can no longer be seen as the neatly designed, geo-specific, singular entity the term once suggested. Maybe this ideal never existed. And if it ever has, it does not seem to have influenced the large-scale urban experiments of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and, in their wake, of many of the contemporary Chinese New Cities. Here planning methods, carefully fine-tuned over hundreds of years, are effortlessly and fundamentally altered to create radical urbanisation machines that



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Joined by the participating studio tutors from Belgium and Hong Kong, CUHK - Assistant Professor Kristof Crolla (Right in image) introduces the project to Queen Mathilde of Belgium (Left in image), who was accompanied by the Belgian Minister-President Kris Peeters, Minister Jean-Claude Marcourt, Minister Céline Fremault, and Deputy Prime Minister Didier Reynders.



CUHK - Assistant Professor Kristof Crolla (Right in image) hands the project publication to Queen Mathilde of Belgium (Left in image), who was accompanied by the Belgian Minister-President Kris Peeters (Right next to the Queen), Minister Jean-Claude Marcourt, Minister Céline Fremault (Left behind the Queen), and Deputy Prime Minister Didier Reynders (Right behind Kris Peeters).



CUHK MArch 1 architecture student Cheng Sum Yee (Right in image) introduces her studio project to Queen Mathilde of Belgium (Left in image), who was accompanied by the Belgian Minister-President Kris Peeters (Behind the Queen), Minister Jean-Claude Marcourt, Minister Céline Fremault, and Deputy Prime Minister Didier Reynders.

allow for swift response to global pressures of development. With Hong Kong as an example, an unprecedented urban model for highest density has materialised in the form of thousands of jam-packed skyscrapers on a few hilly rocks in the South China Sea. Shaped on the one hand by the cities unique topography, but primarily driven by the capital of capitalism's ideal framework for speculative development, a fascinating amalgamate of human activity has emerged from a colonial trading port. Is this the 21st century's ideal city?

As fresh space runs out, housing prices skyrocket and interlocking mobility networks are grinding to a stand-still, the urge for compactness is put under pressure. Meanwhile, across the border, global forces are pushing for a shift in urban programming of what once was the "Factory of the World": vast singularly planned areas are forced to convert and adapt to new and ever changing needs. Economic zones of labour, where urbanity and ecological concerns meet together with great political and sociological influence, are demanding for new forms of collectivity, both for housing as well as for other programs. Although practical, economical, and ecological considerations demand for high densities and hybrid programming, do these models apply everywhere and, within them, how do we safe-guard living conditions while avoiding ending up in a constant Sisyphian failure?

Faced with the caricature of these cities, the participating young architects-to-be aimed to understand the manufacturing of our living environments in order to detect their malfunctions, and learn to reconfigure them with rigour, method, delightfulness and creativity. Starting from their own unique cultural backgrounds, students from both Belgium and Hong Kong were challenged to invent new strategies for architectural implementation into Hong Kong, Shenzhen and the PRD.

By exhibiting all outcomes together, the final objective of the project was to publically trigger a constructive dialogue between both countries and promote alternative visions for the challenges faced in the Asia Pacific region. Following the 3 day exhibition at BoDW, the project is currently on display at the Hong Kong 2013 Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture.

PROJECT CREDITS:

Project Curator:
CROLLA Kristof
Assistant Professor,
the Chinese University of Hong Kong

Collaborating Institutes and Studio Tutors:
The University of Hong Kong (ZHU Tao)
i.c.w. Hasselt University (CEULEMANS Nick & BONGAERTS Peter)

The Hong Kong Design Institute: (COSTA Luis, LEUNG Carol & CHAN Eddie)
i.c.w. The University of Mons: (MEYRANT Stephane, TSIEN Li Mei & CONIGLIO Emmanuelle)

The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CROLLA Kristof)
i.c.w. The Université Libre de Bruxelles (SIMON Alain & DEPRez Eve)