

Re-interpreting Landscape and Architecture

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Figure 1 - UABB is a three month event that is co-organised by Hong Kong and Shenzhen under an innovative “Two Cities, One Biennale” approach which aims to promote education and public discussion around a dynamic programme of architecture, urbanism, design and culture. As co-curators of the Hong Kong edition (2015/2016), the exhibition titled ‘Visions 2050 – Lifestyle and the City’ was conceived as a narrative of the past, present and future centred around the question on our lifestyle and the city.



Figure 2 - Borrowed Nature is a kinetic installation commissioned part of the Design Society’s inaugural ‘Minding the Digital’ exhibition (2017). The kinetic installation with multiple sensors and networked sculptures explores the viewing experience that is division between the material and the virtual that intends to promote a dialogue about the technology and landscape.

With the advance of communication technology in recent decades, specifically the ubiquitous tool of our mobile devices, these have dramatically altered our reading of the city and the way we navigate urban space. Today's architects are faced with requirement for increasingly complex skillsets to make contribution in spatial creation for contemporary society. For our design practice, it seems essential to be openminded and eager to take chances and experiment, as well as being respectful to our cultural heritage and tradition, in order to be able to create a strong connection to its surrounding context and landscape but also critical of the fact our surrounding environments are rapidly transforming.

One of the ongoing projects in the studio, 'Invisible Landscapes: Unfolding Histories of Shing Mun River' tells narrative of Sha Tin town history in the form of 4km long heritage trail along the Shing Mun River. The project forms a part of the wider Shing Mun River revitalisation project managed by the Sha Tin District council. Twelve site specific landscape installations were introduced along the trail including the historic Che Kung Temple, the Tsang Tai Uk Village, Lion Rock tunnel, and Sha Tin New Town development. The design approach makes reference to the cultural understanding of the landscape with use of traditional landscape technique such as "borrowed scenery" and "visual axis" to enhance the experience by overlaying the narrative with the spatial and geographical condition which have dramatically been transformed, mainly with reclamation of the substantial land area in preparation for the new town development. Shing Mun River has long been a popular venue for the local residents to pursue leisure and recreation activities. Being important public space for the town,

the project was subject to stringent procedures including local council meetings, a number of workshops with the steering committee group to refine the narrative. The historical research undertaken by the studio also included the field trips and photographic mapping to ascertain location of the flight path for the first powered flight which took place above the Shing Mun River in 1911, the information was instrumental to the location and design development of the installation.

Some of the studio's past projects such as the 2015 Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture Hong Kong (UABB) and Borrowed Nature interactive installation actively aims to further develop our understanding of design culture in Hong Kong and experimentation with architectural representation. Through our training at the Bartlett School of Architecture, with its strong tradition for experimentation, this has been instrumental in our approach and we continue to explore and engage with issues through the medium of art installations which become a means to devise and explore ideas in addressing the social and economic change of the digital era.

Increasingly we are part of an industry shift to a more multi-disciplinary and collaborative mode of working and a multi-faceted approach becomes an effective tool in contemporary design. Relying on intuition, critical thinking, representation and craft to push the boundary in spatial design for future city conditions and trying take on the challenge of devising and developing ideas to address the social and economic change of the digital era.



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

Figure 3,4,5 Invisible Landscapes (2019) describes the evolution of Sha Tin's unique urban landscape through a riverside walk of twelve permanent site-specific architectural interventions. Responding to the surrounding context, the trail celebrates the cultural fabric of time and connects past and present relationship between the urban and natural landscape, geography, infrastructure, cultural and sporting legacy along the Shing Mun River.