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WORKING WOMEN

Toying with the impossible

One Plus Partnership co-founder believes designers have to dream big to excel, writes **Wong Yat-hei**

Virginia Lung Wai-ki, co-founder and director of design studio One Plus Partnership, might have made a career out of dazzling the world with her state-of-the-art style of architecture, but there was a time when she thought her prospects in the field looked decidedly grim.

Lung dropped arts and crafts as one of her subjects in secondary school because, like many local art students, she worried about her future prospects. Later, while studying a higher diploma in interior design, she realised that her passion for the subject overruled any future concerns.

"I would work late into the night on assignments but would not feel stressed at all because I was doing what I loved," she says.

After graduating with an architecture degree from the University of Oregon in the US, Lung worked in Singapore for a year before returning to Hong Kong.

Leaving two design companies because she was unsatisfied with her roles, she moved to Steve Leung Designers, where she met her husband and co-founder of One Plus Partnership, Ajax Law Ling-kit. Sharing similar design philosophies, they decided they wanted a platform to



Virginia Lung stands in front of the impressive collection of awards that One Plus Partnership has racked up since 2004. Photo: Lau Wai

more freely express their creativity.

"Both of us wanted to contribute to design and do things with style. We came to a point in 2004 where we thought there was no boss that we wanted to work for, so we decided to open our own business," Lung says.

Lung doesn't find working with her husband a problem as they both share the same thoughts on design. "I am very lucky because my husband and I see things the same way. A staff member might ask for our opinion on a design project separately, but we will give almost identical answers. It freaks people out," she says.

Lung believes designers have to dream big. "A designer must be able to think of things that others think is impossible. It's tough but you have to keep on trying. Design has to always be a part of your life," she says.

Since starting One Plus Partnership, Lung has become

very popular on the mainland. Her projects include the Palace Cinema at the IFC Mall in Shanghai, the Wuhan Pixel Box Cinema and Shenzhen's Aix Arome Coffee Shop.

"I like to have a theme for my designs," she says. "The theme for the Wuhan Pixel Box Cinema, for example, is cloud. The entrance, the corridor, the open spaces and every piece of furniture is related to clouds because I think movies are like clouds – they can take any shape and have no limits. It is one of my favourite designs."

Being a pioneer does have its price, however. Lung admits that it is not easy to work for

her because her designs are so unique.

"Everything we do is one of a kind. There is no point of reference. My staff need to work extra hard to try to understand my design concepts and this would not be possible if they were not as passionate as I am about design," she says.



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career tracker



Billy Chan, chief operating officer – P&C, AXA General Insurance Hong Kong

In his new role, Chan oversees the operations of AXA's property and casualty (P&C) business' core channels, including commercial, retail, and proprietary business and distribution management. In over 25 years at AXA General Insurance, he has developed a distinctive career and held key senior positions in various business and functional units.



Agnes Choi, chief P&C officer, AXA General Insurance Hong Kong

Choi now spearheads AXA's property and casualty (P&C) business in Hong Kong, covering bancassurance, underwriting, claims, pricing and reinsurance. With over 30 years of industry experience, she is responsible for formulating long-term strategic plans for P&C to achieve profitable growth and support the broader strategies of AXA Hong Kong.



Timothy Chen, president and group MD, Telstra International Group

Chen is an internationally recognised technology executive with experience at major global firms including Microsoft, Motorola and AT&T Bell Laboratories. "Chen's appointment increases the focus and urgency in growing our presence in Asia and realising the significant revenue opportunities in the region," says Telstra CEO David Thodey.



Kevin Goldmintz, head of HK and Macau, MasterCard Worldwide

Goldmintz will be responsible for the overall performance of MasterCard in Hong Kong and Macau. "[Goldmintz] will be tasked with providing strategic direction and support in connection with the delivery of advanced products and services to meet the demands of the market," says Ling Hai, division president, Greater China, for MasterCard Worldwide.

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A designer must think of things that others think is impossible. It's tough but you have to keep on trying

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