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ART & CULTURE

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DWELLING POETICALLY, FRAME BY FRAME

在框子之間詩意地棲居

Bamboo – the theme for the Mellon Town Residential lobby, Shenzhen.
深圳金地梅麗鎮概念住宅大堂設計主題為竹。

The late Edward Said's autobiography is appropriately titled *Out of Place*, because, as a child, he migrated between Cairo and Lebanon. Could this emotional and geographical displacement have helped influence one of the greatest thinkers of our age? Being Out Of Place is not a rootless condition, but instead enables one to jump between different frames, and to be at once in and out of a community. It can enable one to summon forth an entire world.

This is exactly the possibility that Ajax Law and Virginia Lung – founders of One Plus Partnership Limited – embrace. Throughout their careers, the couple has creatively navigated between different frames.

Before founding their own company, Ajax and Virginia endured the frames and limitations of the daily workday. They followed the footsteps of their bosses, and were trapped and suffocated by routine work. The genesis of their startup company was a small 400 sq. feet apartment. This cubicle was both their love-nest and a studio for their first design project.

東方主義大師薩伊德 (Edward Said) 自傳 *Out of Place* 中譯書名為《格格不入》，他小時候來回於開羅與黎巴嫩兩地之間，「流離感」不僅在地域上，也在感情上，這可造就了他成為思想大師。「格格不入」，與其說是無處可歸，不如說是可以在不同的框子之間來回跳躍，在其中又不在其中的狀態，倒可以讓人看到更廣闊的世界。

這其實也是壹正企劃創始人羅靈傑 (Ajax Law) 與龍慧祺 (Virginia Lung) 的寫照，這兩口子也可於不同框子間跳躍。

未成立自己的公司之前，Ajax 與 Virginia 自覺是被框在小格子裡的人，每天跟著上司的路走，無法發揮自己的潛力。他倆踏上創業之路，始於一個只有四百多呎實用面積的小格子：既是他們的愛巢，也是他們合作的第一個設計 project。

Text : Felicity Cheng Photos : Daniel (part of)



Pixels of different lengths combine into the logo wall.
長短不齊的 pixel 組成 logo wall。

The Multi-functional Cubicle

For their cubicle, Ajax and Virginia emphasized three differing aspects. Invertible blinds are installed on the walls, and a mirror and red plastic wrapping are inserted on either side of the blinds. When the blinds are turned with the mirror up, the room becomes spacious and simplistic. When turned with the plastic up, the room becomes colorful and luxurious. Thirdly, loose the blinds and the room becomes orderly and stark, revealing the original cement wall beneath.

“All designs should cater to the person living there,” says Ajax. “Multi-functional design is not a new idea. The challenge is always to integrate this idea into the daily living space.” For Ajax, the reason why much multi-functional furniture has little changed is that designers often fail to consider the living habits and conveniences of users.

Plastic mirrors are known for their light weight. The entire layout of the room can change with a pull of the blinds. A simple pull or release can reflect the user’s shifting emotions. As Virginia explains, architecture animates the living space.

Different architectures reflect, for each of us, the diverse pursuit of a comfortable lifestyle. The human psyche and communal development are inevitably affected by the surrounding architecture. Architecture is an attempt, in the philosopher Martin Heidegger’s words, at dwelling poetically on this earth.

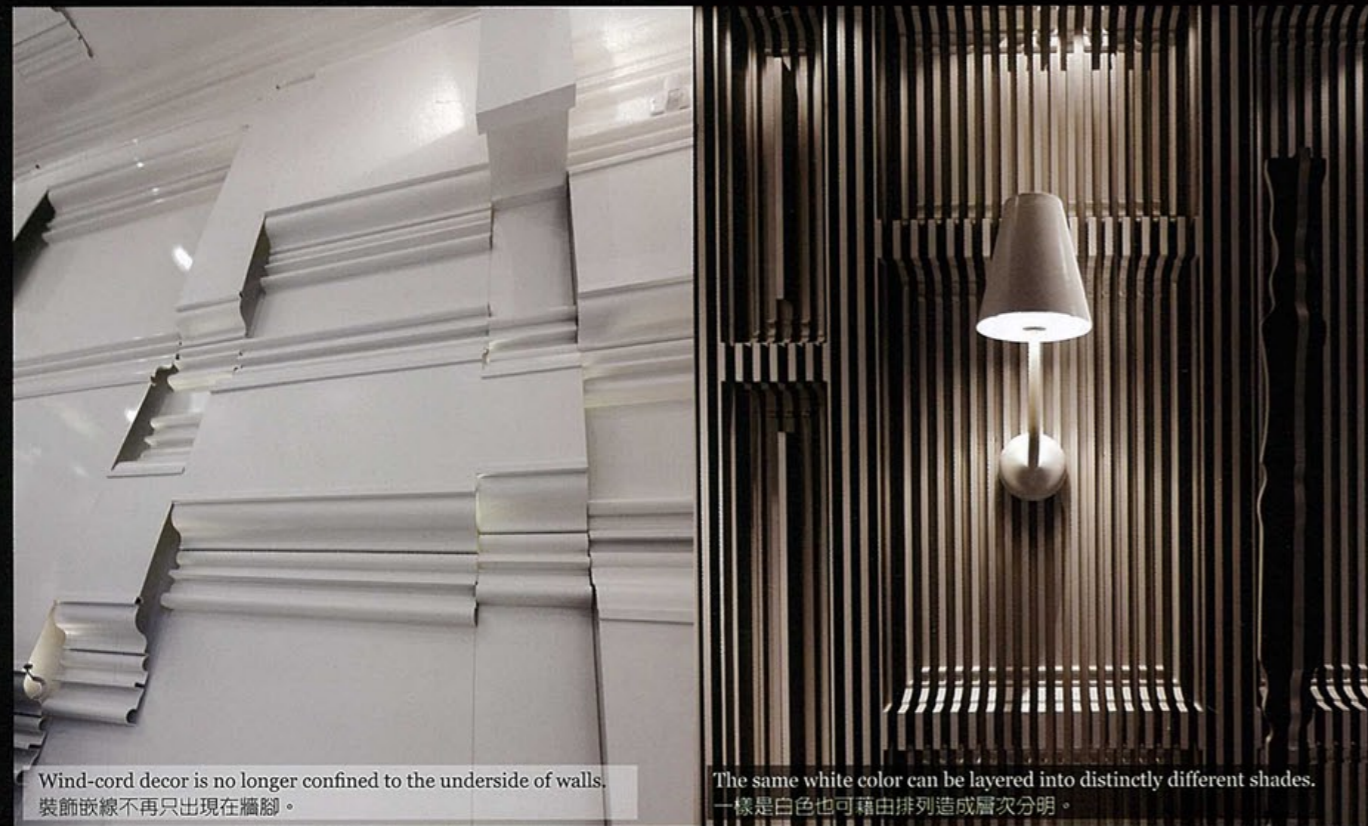
A Designer’s Magic Turned Sidekicks into Leads

After the founding of One Plus, the couple could not immediately jump out of predefined frames and regulations. Instead, they took time at brand building and liaising with clients. Rather than designing according to their own whims, they carefully offered their customers appealing choices.

In the Wuhan Molding Show House, for instance, the clients asked for classical elements. While including these elements was not difficult, Ajax found the real challenge lay in breaking with tradition, and moving beyond the expected. In the end, they drafted two proposals; the first was a generic classical design, while the second built upon the moldings found in traditional designs. Where molding served ornamental functions in classical designs, One Plus gave it more prominence. In the end, the client was impressed with their intricate and elaborate concept. Ajax and Virginia’s efforts won them the Asia Pacific Interior Design Awards.



Ajax Law and Virginia Lung, founders of One Plus Partnership Limited.
壹正企劃創立人羅靈傑與龍慧祺。



Wind-cord decor is no longer confined to the underside of walls.
裝飾嵌線不再只出現在牆腳。

The same white color can be layered into distinctly different shades.
一樣是白色也可藉由排列造成層次分明。

multi-function 多重性格

Ajax 和 Virginia 給小房子孕育了三種性格，兩堵牆安裝了垂直簾，一面是鏡身，另一面是紅色膠身；反轉鏡身，房間變得開揚而簡潔，反轉紅色那邊，則變得華麗而繁富。如果任由垂直簾像透光的百頁簾般，間格有緻，便透出了底部水泥牆身的原始感覺。

「設計應以居住在其間的人為主，」Ajax 說：「multi-functional 不是新概念，但怎樣融入到日常生活，才是難題。」multi-functional 傢具往往常年維持在同一狀態，只因設計師並沒有考慮到用家的生活習慣，用得是否簡便。

鏡膠的特質是輕便，只要一拉簾子，房子就「變臉」了。開合之間，就是人活在其間，起伏變化的心情。這就是 Virginia 所言：以建築去刺激居住其間的人。

不同的建築物正是人追求舒適生活的反映。人的心理狀況，乃至社區的發展，都在某種程度上受到建築物的影響，此所以海德格 (Martin Heidegger) 嘗言：「詩意地棲居」。

設計師魔法 配角變主角

成立公司後，兩位設計師也不見得可立時跳出框子之外。建立知名度與客戶信任都需要時間，兩人不能馬上憑自己的心意做設計，寧願努力一點，每次多做幾個 proposal 給顧客挑選。

比如 Wuhan Molding Show House 這個項目，客戶的要求是要有古典的元素，Ajax 覺得做一個設計，要有某種元素並不難，但要突破既定的框架，做出有特色的設計，就很難。他們給了客戶兩個設計，一個是經典的古典式設計，另外一個是從古典風格中抽取了裝飾嵌線這個元素加以發揮；嵌線今次不再只是室內裝飾的配角，而是交錯有序地營造出特別風格的主角。客戶覺得第二個設計很有衝擊，於是放手讓他們發揮，結果這個設計拿了亞太室內設計大獎。

Books and Chandeliers, Pixels and Drifting Clouds

Both Ajax and Virginia agree that once they find a certain theme for their design, related ideas quickly emerge. Given liberty, like drifting clouds and flowing waters, their inspiration becomes boundless.

The Wuhan Pixel Box Cinema adopted the pixel as its theme. The grand hall box office features a curved enclave with an oval body and a round top. The structure was built with over 6000 reflective steel panels. The audience, enclosed in a world of mirrors, finds reflections of themselves in moving images. Images shift between the reflective panels, until one cannot distinguish the original from the reflection, or the movie from the reality.

When designing the Shanghai IFC cinema, the designers used another trick. Conceptualizing images without borders, they mashed moving images into drifting clouds. For the Beijing Kubrick Bookshop, they used a books and chandeliers theme. The hanging book cupboards, inspired by books stacked together, symbolized the connection between books and people. Similarly, the chandeliers and cables, modeled on network cables found all over the country, represented the online world that connects every family in China.

To me, these three designs are quite unrelated. But, as Ajax and Virginia explain, a designer must always twist and turn in order to find the connecting dots of daily life and extract new meanings from different frames.

Hong Kong to the Mainland : From One Frame to Another

What limitations do the designers face in Hong Kong and Mainland China? Both referred to Hong Kong's high real estate prices as a major challenge. Also, from Central to Shang Shui, from fast-food chains to grand hotels, Hong Kong developers often request the same pompous style. Once Mainland China used to value Hong Kong designs. Now, their expectations have been influenced by an influx of foreign designers.

Despite raised expectations, competition in the mainland industry is not as keen as in Hong Kong. Ajax mentions how he sees plot after plot of un-developed land while taking the train across the country. China, he believes, will continue to be a vibrant market, without any risk of saturation, for years to come. The two designers hope that they will one day see the same vibrancy in Hong Kong.

In the meantime, they will continue navigating between different frames, slowly molding the city into a special place that can be lived poetically and designed practically.



The Kubrick bookstore emphasizes green. According to the Five Elements of Chinese tradition, books belong to the wood element. Kubrick 書店以綠色為主調，皆因書在五行中屬木。



Thousands of steel panels form a giant display wall. 數千塊鏡鋼組成的影像展示牆。

像素與行雲 書本與吊燈

Ajax 與 Virginia 談及自己的設計特點，都不約而同談到只要一且定了主題，就會有天馬行空相關的概念走出來。如果要用一個詞語去形容兩人的設計，我覺得是「行雲流水」：變動不居，連綿不絕。

武漢摩爾城電影院以像素「pixel」為主題，其中 Box Office 用了六、七千塊鏡鋼去做成一個底部橢圓形、頂部圓形的空間。看完電影，觀眾走進其中，自身的影像反映在細小的鏡鋼中，他動，鏡中的自己也在動，鏡鋼與鏡鋼互相反映，看電影的人成了電影中的人，影像如流水在鏡鋼間流瀉，變幻不息。

設計上海 IFC 戲院時，設計師又變出了另一種魔法。回應影像無邊無際的特點，他們用了行雲的概念，將雲與電影互通的特點加以發揮。而北京 Kubrick 書店則以書與吊燈為主題，吊在半空的櫃子是疊起來的書本，是書與書之間的聯繫，也是人與人的聯繫。半空中的吊燈與電線就像中國巷弄裡皆能看到的電纜網絡。這個網絡連接全國每個家庭。

這三個設計在我看來並不是互不相涉的，正是 Ajax 與 Virginia 所言，做設計就是要扭一扭，在日常物事中尋找連接的點，在框與框之間尋找新的意義。

香港與內地：一個框到另一個框

問兩位設計師，內地與香港的限制何如？兩位都談到香港的限制在於地太貴，發展商多是單一的要求高貴風格，無論由新界到港島，由快餐店到大酒店，一律典雅高貴。而內地起初崇尚香港設計，漸漸由於引入更多外國設計師，他們對設計的要求更高了。

但內地的競爭如何激烈還是不及香港，Ajax提及他有時由國內一個地方去另一個地方，在火車上看到的是茫茫一片尚未開發的土地，再過很多年中國的市場也不會飽和。兩位設計師也希望有一天在香港、在自己的地方，也能跳出框框的限制，用設計把香港打造成可詩意地棲居，也可詩意地設計的城市。■