



Hong Kong
June 2026

THE ARCHITECTURE EXPERIENCE

AN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING COURSE ON
LIVEABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY, AND INCLUSIVITY
IN HYPER DENSE ENVIRONMENTS IN HONG KONG



Hong Kong skyline

HYPER DENSE ENVIRONMENTS

With an average density of more than 275 persons per hectare (accounting for only built-up area), Hong Kong is one of the world's densest cities. Of the total land area of Hong Kong, more than 70% comprises hilly terrain and environmentally sensitive areas with rich wildlife habitats. The city has preserved most of its ecological landscape in its natural state, classifying them as 'protected areas' - thus limiting the availability of developable land. Topographical challenges coupled with rapid growth have led Hong Kong to embrace vertical living; where people, goods, and services are concentrated in a tight footprint. This characteristic of high-density urban living in Hong Kong is largely viewed not only as desirable but vital to its functioning as a global megacity.

The mixed-use dense urban fabric coupled with excellent public transport affords its residents ease of access, convenience, and precious savings in travel time. For businesses, the density offers significant economic advantages. The concentration of people facilitates the exchange of ideas, spurs productivity and innovation, and contributes to the vibrant living-working environment of the city. To make such high densities work, the city has made consistent and repeated investments in public transport, water and drainage infrastructure, green spaces and recreational facilities and other supporting infrastructure.

The urban density of Hong Kong shatters the myth that people have cultural notions about the use of space and density. Hong Kong hosts individuals and families from across the world and they are able to see value in the unique qualities that this global city has to offer. While on one hand, it has very little to offer in terms of personal built space, it more than makes up through its well-maintained public spaces, an excellent network of pedestrian pathways and world class public transport.



THE ARCHITECTURE EXPERIENCE

Yick Cheong Building. Photo by Benh LIEU SONG

The best approach to growing as an architect is to learn from experiencing and observing. The *Architecture Experience* aims to do just that. Participants get to observe the evolution of high-density built environments and their relationship with the natural environment through site visits, and interactions with agencies, and document the learning in a themed narrative for later referencing.

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**7 DAYS,
20 PARTICIPANTS**

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These visits will focus on urban development through the years with a focus on the current needs of creating a sustainable environment with a high quality of life, involving the community as stakeholders. All the while looking at sustainability as an underlying theme from the macro to the micro level. The visits also include observations of local identity areas rejuvenated with new public spaces, upgraded streetscapes, or sensitive injection of new homes and amenities.

IMPORTANT PLACES VISITED



Yick Cheong Building is a fine example of Hong Kong's unique architecture. The building was constructed during a time when the city was experiencing rapid growth, and architects were experimenting with new designs to maximize living space in a dense urban environment. The building's innovative design features narrow balconies that extend from the façade, providing each unit with natural ventilation and sunlight.

The building's vibrant and colourful façade is also noteworthy. The use of bright colours was not common in traditional Hong Kong architecture, but the architect's bold decision to incorporate a rainbow of hues has made Yick Cheong Building a recognizable landmark in the city. The colour scheme also serves a practical purpose by helping residents locate their units easily.



The M+ museum was designed as a part of a redevelopment master plan for the West Kowloon Cultural District in the late 2000s. The large concrete structure is built on entirely reclaimed land.

The building features a unique design with a podium and tower forming an upside-down 'T' shape. The podium extends above ground and contains 17,000 square meters of exhibition space, cinemas, a Mediatheque, a Learning Hub, and a Roof Garden with views of Victoria Harbour. The M+ Facade facing the harbour is equipped with LEDs for screening moving images, visible from West Kowloon waterfront and Hong Kong Island. The museum offers multiple entry points, seamlessly connecting indoor and outdoor spaces for accessibility.

IMPORTANT PLACES VISITED



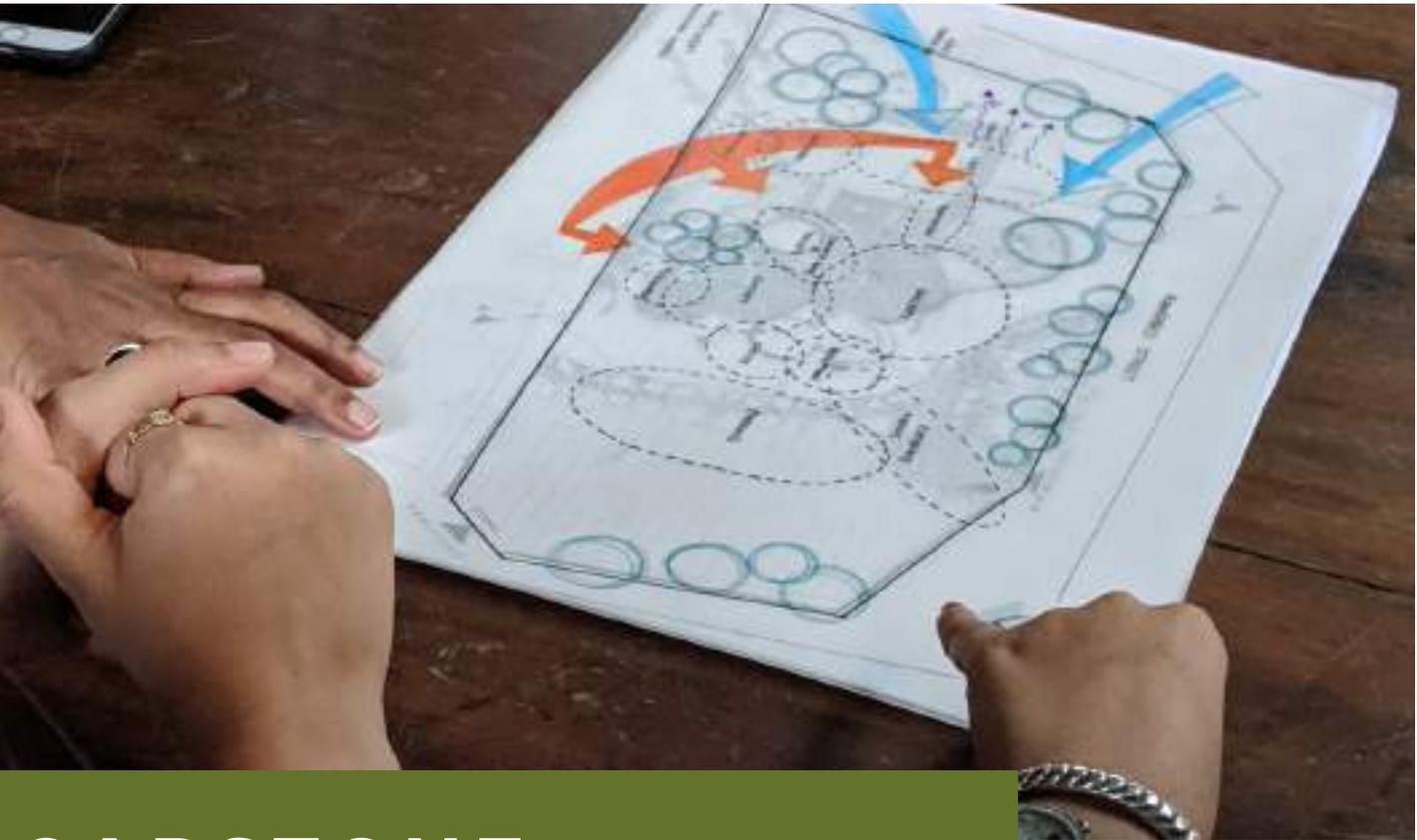
Hong Kong Design Institute presents a fresh perspective on urban design by reimagining the built environment in a way that encourages social interaction. Traditionally, social interactions in urban areas tend to decline as one moves upwards, but this project challenges this notion by incorporating different levels of interaction within the building. One section of the program adds height to the structure, creating new opportunities for social connection.

The base of the building serves as a vast "urban lounge," fostering social gatherings and encouraging exchanges. The space also features a mix of indoor and outdoor green areas, providing stunning views of the surrounding countryside and strengthening the building's connection to the city.



The ZCB is the first building to achieve a zero-carbon rating in Hong Kong. The design prioritizes energy demand control by implementing an energy hierarchy. The building's passive design is climate-responsive, featuring an optimized layout, form, orientation, and envelope to maximize natural ventilation, daylighting, and solar shading. The expansive entrance hallway is strategically oriented to take advantage of prevailing summer breezes, creating a comfortable environment for gatherings and temporary exhibitions without the need for air conditioning.

The core design concept behind the ZCB is eco-efficiency, which aims to promote high environmental quality while minimizing the building's environmental impact.



Project work by the October 2019 batch - A pop up pavilion design

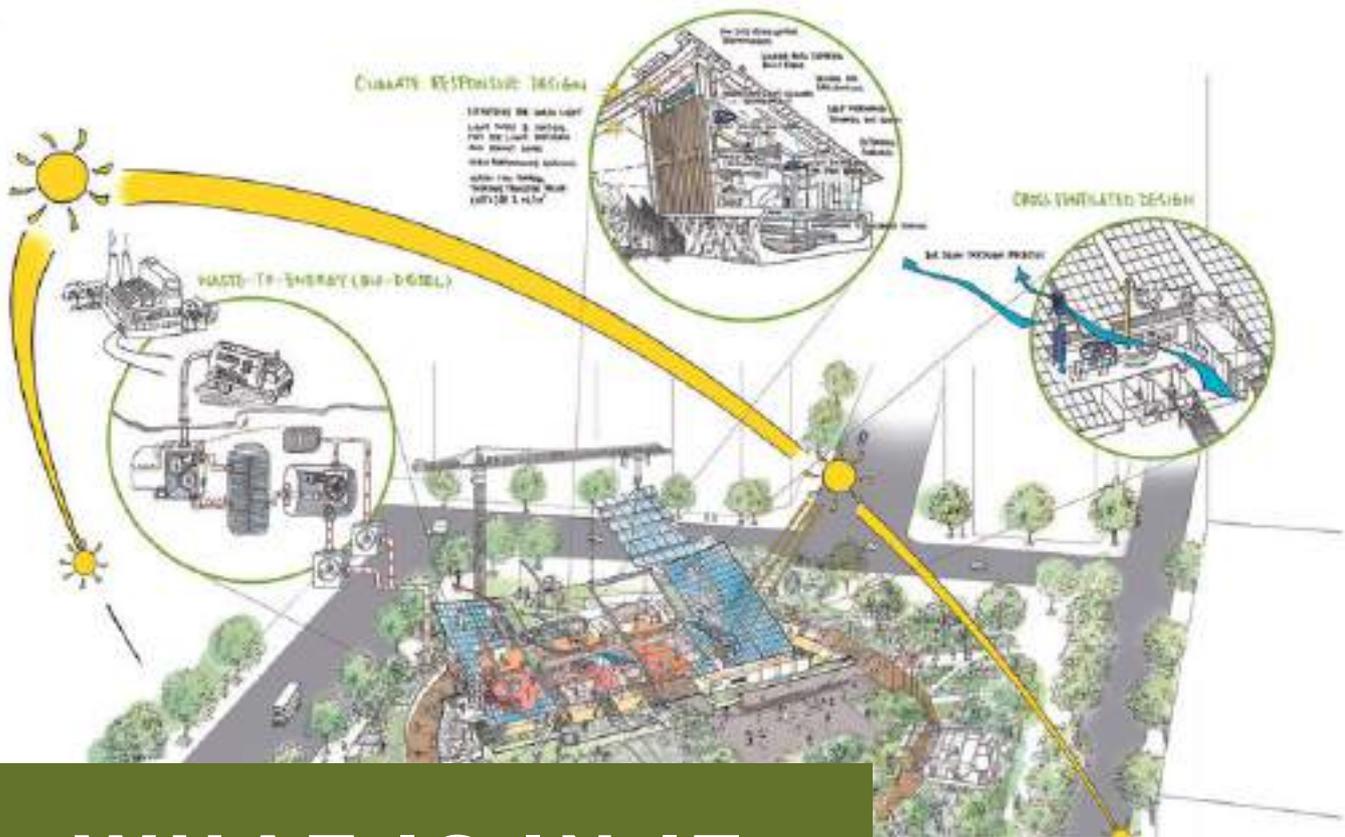
CAPSTONE PROJECT OVERVIEW

The experience is designed with the intent of enhancing architectural understanding, by creating a hands-on and interactive learning layer on top of a curated travel plan. Throughout the trip, participants will visit architecturally relevant sites, both historic and modern.

**“ ON TOUR
DISCUSSIONS,
ON SITE
OBSERVATIONS,
ASSIGNMENTS AND
FEEDBACK ”**

They will explore methods of observation and documentation while focusing on high-density environments. Participants will be given an existing project in which they will have to conduct a basic SWOT analysis and identify areas that could be enhanced by ideologies of liveability, sustainability, and inclusivity in hyper-dense environments. Participants will engage with the curator in daily sessions and discussions. Participants will also get to engage in dialogue with professionals from local agencies and draw parallels with their design approach back home in India.

For the participants who desire to, there would be an option to extend the project where they get to work on a concept plan to develop and rejuvenate an existing housing area by addressing specific urban challenges they face in their home cities.



ZCB Zero Carbon Building. Sketch photo by Ronald Lu and Partners

WHAT IS IN IT FOR ME?

Participants get to understand high-density environments as a concept, and how to draw parallels with the Indian geographic. Participants will document and consolidate their observations, engage in critical thinking and design exercises, and build a repository of knowledge created over the experience.

Post the trip, this work may be published and exhibited with collaborating organisations and media outlets.

From a learning perspective, participants get to understand how their domain of interest approaches sustainability, and how they can work towards Sustainable Development Goals in their projects.

At the end of the Experience, participants will have an improved practical understanding of what they study in college and learn how to implement these strategies into their project, enhancing their portfolios.

Participants may also get internship opportunities from our partners.

“ RELEVANT PROJECTS, INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES, UNDERSTANDING OF HYPER DENSE ENVIRONMENTS ”

EXPERIENCE OVERVIEW

DAY 1

Arrival in Hong Kong.

Orientation on the structure of the tour visits and project. Finalisation of teams and the participants' roles and responsibilities within the team will be defined.

Places to visit: Kowloon Park, Tsim Tsha Sui Promenade, K11 Mall, HarbourFront (Skyline view).

DAY 2

Topics of discussion: Understanding the history of vertical growth and the HK housing authority's plans for a high-density environment.

Places to visit: Yick Cheong Building (Monster Building), Tai Kwun Center of Heritage and Art, Bank of China Tower (outside visit), Central Harbourfront Event Space, Hong Kong observation wheel (outside visit).

DAY 3

Topics of discussion: The influence of modernism, post-modernism and the rise of contemporary architecture.

Places to visit: Choi Hung Estate, Yau Ma Tei area visit, Clubhouse Mongkok Sky Park, Langham Mall (Rooftop Green Oasis).

DAY 4

Topics of discussion: Land reclamation, building with the challenges of HK's terrain.

Places to visit: ZCB (Zero Carbon Building), MegaBox, M+ Museum, West Kowloon Pavillion and Cultural District.

DAY 5

Topics of discussion: Integration of green spaces and usable community gathering spaces.

Places to visit: Hong Kong Design Institute, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Ocean Terminal, Harbour City Mall.

DAY 6

Day trip to Macao

Topics of discussion: Colonial, civic, casino, and contemporary landmarks.

Places to visit: The Ruins of St. Paul's, Senado Square, Morpheus at City of Dreams + Grand Lisboa Macau + The Venetian Macao (outside visits).

DAY 7

Free Day

Culmination of the tour, brief on submission of Capstone project. Departure to India or home country.



**Curator -
Ar. Rachita Bhonsle
(B.Arch)**

The Architecture Experience Hong Kong is curated by Rachita Bhonsle, who will also be accompanying the participants on the tour. Rachita is a senior architect at a private firm which specialises in high-rise buildings and high-density residential communities. She has a background in environmental policy management, sustainable design, and energy-efficient planning.

Rachita has worked mainly in the residential, hospitality and educational sectors. She is passionate about climatology-based design, the environmental impact of built spaces and sustainable site planning. These principles have driven her work for the last decade.

CURATOR & TOUR LEADER

Timeline

- 2007-2012 B.Arch, MS Ramaiah Institute of Technology, Bangalore
- 2012-2014 Vishwannath Associates, Bangalore
- 2015 Graduate Certificate Program in Energy and Sustainability – Major in Environmental Policy and Management, University of Denver, Colorado, USA
- 2016 Rogue Architecture, Wheatridge, Colorado
- 2017-2023 Poornakriti Architects, Bangalore

ALUMNI TESTIMONIALS

Participant - The Architecture Experience Vietnam (Feb 2024)

The trip allowed me a very holistic experience of the cities, which is a first for me despite having been on quite a few “study” trips. It encompassed everything from contemporary and historically relevant site visits to vibrant day and night markets, offering insights into various aspects beyond architecture- food, culture, history, and so on. To our surprise and joy, the lively local New Year celebrations added a dynamic dimension, revealing various facets of the city's essence. It was encouraging to see studios and practices using sustainability and adaptive reuse as forefront agendas in a relatable urban context. I enjoyed seeing the variety in the typologies and languages of architecture within the same city. Would definitely want to explore more into the observations and learnings from Vietnam. There were a lot of spontaneous discussions encouraged and initiated by Atul Sir, that made me look a few more steps beyond just the surface and helped me catch onto certain aspects in a much more simplified way. He was really a great mentor to have on this trip!

Participant - The Architecture Experience Japan (July 2023)

The learning experience was not only with regards to architecture, it also included learning about the social and cultural environment. I loved how I got to experience both contemporary and traditional cultures in parallel and also get the opportunity to interact with architects like Florian Busch as well as with the locals. Hats off to Rachita for being so patient and positive in every situation. She made me feel very comfortable . The team was very enthusiastic and comfortable to work with. The accommodation, transportation and every other basic need was very comfortably organised with the cost in consideration.. The team was very enthusiastic and comfortable to work with. The accommodation, transportation and every other basic need was very comfortably organised with the cost in consideration.

Participant - The Architecture Experience Singapore (Feb 2024)

We learned a lot about urban planning, city-scale development, and how planning and sustainability go hand in hand. We visited exhibitions that reinforced those ideas and later got time to explore our ideas in the form of projects. The trip was a balance of both fun and academics. Rachita made the entire learning process more fun and carefree, which allowed us to explore more around the core concepts. Overall, I had an amazing time with her and am glad that she was our mentor. An Amazing experience, I understood new ideas and concepts from a new perspective. Site visits were the best, I got to learn a lot and also saw real-life applications of concepts related to urban planning.

Participant - The Architecture Experience Sri Lanka (October 2019)

Studio and site visits were very well organised but what I loved the most were the interactive sessions that we had with various artists and architects in Sri Lanka. Conversations with them were an extremely enriching experience. I got a better understanding in material selection, and the integration of nature in the landscape was eye opening. Prithy and Kshitija curated the experience extremely well and I got to learn a lot from them. About the places as well as the field in general. It was a great experience altogether! Very well planned especially keeping in mind the fact that we were here for a decent number of days and have almost covered everything ranging from the historic places to the modern ones. This trip was worth the money and will definitely influence my design in the future.



AYUSHI MADAN
4th Year, Wadiyar
Centre For
Architecture, Mysore



SARAH SULEKHA
Architect



**TANUSHREE
MURKIBHAVI**
3rd Year, BNCA, Pune



SHHRRUTI JAIN
Architect



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

All our Experiences are aimed at implementing and solving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set by the UN.

Goal no. 17, Partnerships for the Goals, is key to our Experiences, since we work with a global team of experts to be able to add value to the learning of the participants.

The Architecture Experience focuses on 3 of the Goals primarily -



Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

- Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being



Goal 11: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

- By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing
- By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement
- By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters



Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

- By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources
- Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production



THE HAPPY LLAMAS

At **The Happy Llamas**, we curate Experiences for participants to show them how their domains work in the real world, and how they approach sustainability. Why?

We believe that the world has a lot to offer, and only on going out and engaging with different cultures in different corners of the world can one get a holistic view of life, and evolve personally and professionally. We also feel strongly about the need to make this planet, the only one that we have, more sustainable.

Keeping these two thoughts in mind, we work with domain and subject matter experts to co-curate Experiences where we inspire today's youth on how to make this world a better place to live for themselves and their peers, and creating positive global impact in their domains of interest.

We invite you to join us in this journey, and be a part of an inclusive and global community of changemakers!

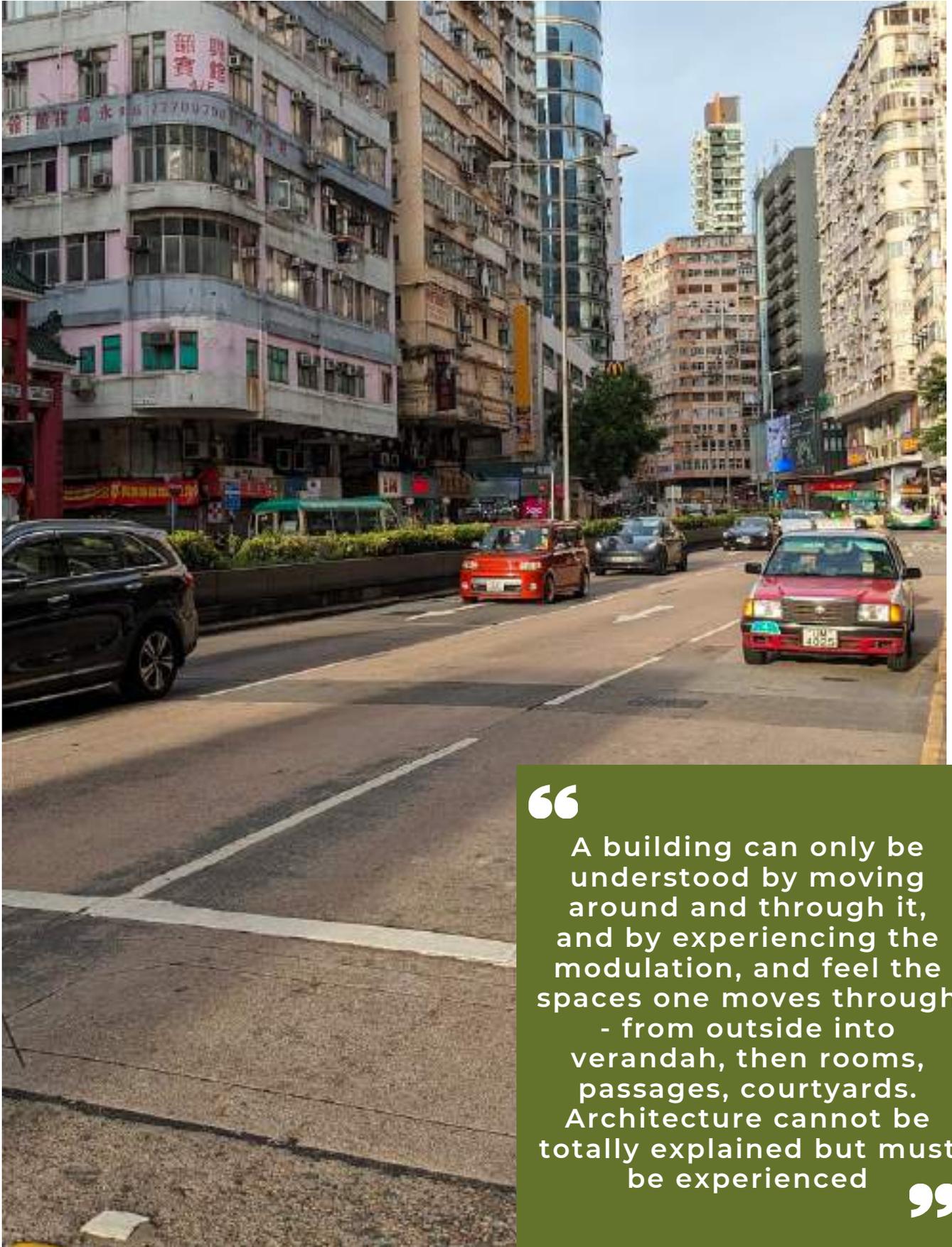
Contact Us

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WE ADHERE TO WORK TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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A building can only be understood by moving around and through it, and by experiencing the modulation, and feel the spaces one moves through - from outside into verandah, then rooms, passages, courtyards. Architecture cannot be totally explained but must be experienced

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GEOFFREY BAWA

Nathan Road in the evening sunlight,
Hong Kong