

EYES ON THEM

Here are the architects and designers from Southeast Asia we want to keep firmly on our radar.

“ARCHITECTURE ISN'T FOR THE WEAK-OF-WILL OR FAINT-OF-HEART. IT'S GRUELLING, TIRING, DOESN'T PAY, AND MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, WILL HAVE YOU PRESSED AGAINST A WALL THAT HAS OUTLASTED THE COLLAPSE OF SOVIET RUSSIA AND NAJIB RAZAK'S GOVERNMENT,” writes *d+a*'s Malaysia-based, regular contributor Nizar Musa.

An architecture practitioner himself, Musa goes on to say, “Aspirants would need a healthy amount of fortitude to cut it in this business.” And he is right. Which is why it is important to recognise those who dare to tread this well-worn path, especially the ones who are relatively new to the game.

In line with the Southeast Asia theme of this Annual, *d+a* turns its periscope onto the region, and identifies architects and designers from this fast-developing region to keep watch on. From Indonesia to The Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia and even Myanmar, these individuals inject a breath of fresh air into the urban (and sometimes even rural) landscapes where their projects are located.

So, while they might not be household names yet, but their commitment to their craft has already begun to garner them recognition. More importantly, they are applying philosophy, sustainability, innovation and creativity into their designs to make a positive impact on the built environment.

CAMBODIA

WORDS
Danielle
Keeton-Olsen

HUN CHANSAN
Re-Edge Architects

SOK MUYGECH
BMK Architects

HOK KANG
Hok Kang Architects



HOK KANG

This architect's style has become recognised throughout Cambodia after his company's first and most prolific project the Brown Coffee franchise. The firm's 19 cafes in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap all have a different atmosphere, from the vintage flair in Phnom Penh's trendy BKK1 locations, to the open communal environment of The Brown, in front of the Raintree co-working space, which he also designed.

Hok's approach to design is a marriage of artistry and entrepreneurship. The starting point is always the end user, while bearing in mind the rapid development and modernisation of Cambodia. As a result, he has developed his business beyond architecture, founding real estate development firm Urbanland Asia, Raintree and holding shares in Brown Coffee as well. Yet, design remains his passion, which he sees as an opportunity to propel Cambodia and its young, motivated population into the same strata as Southeast Asia's other cities.



Hi Land Hotel lobby. Obis que et vella nobilitant te placeten imagnia sinclausus



SOK MUYGECH

The structure of Cambodian shophouses are so standardised that most clients balk when architect Sok Muygech suggests a radical change. But the partner at Phnom Penh's architecture and interior design firm BMK Architects says the design and science behind her renovations gain clients' trust. She often suggests moving a staircase, breaking down a wall or removing a floor to add more space in a narrow shophouse. Her clients generally concede once they see her sketches. She has also transformed simple, boxy hotels, like the Hi Land Hotel in Phnom Penh, to a green lung just by breaking apart the existing walls and balcony.

Even though most of her clients seek open spaces and fresh air in their daily lives, they are not always comfortable breaking out of the traditional four by 16 m² shophouse. Given how much time people at home, Sok aspires to show her clients that they can create a better lifestyle for themselves if they are willing to rearrange their habitats.



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HUN CHANSAN

Hun Chansan practices architecture with an intention to contribute towards good urban growth. His firm, Re-Edge Architecture, has grown in prominence and project scope since he opened it in Phnom Penh in 2011. The sharp-corners and open-spaces characteristics of Re-Edge's designs are increasingly popping up throughout the Cambodian capital, gracing modern, elegant villas, to the distinct Lumiere Hotel jutting up from the Boeng Kak Kang I neighborhood. Its unique style also attracts boundary-pushing clients such as the Noro Mall, which prioritises open spaces and accepts mobile payments only.

Hun is a proponent of innovation in the area of energy efficiency. When he has a moment to spare, he reaches for his sketchbook to think of ways to improve the design of his ongoing projects. He also uses it to draw out his thoughts and ideas on how to create more new architectural concepts for Cambodia.



PHILIPPINES

WORDS
Mercedes
Romero

JASON BUENSALIDO
Buensalido Architects

SONNY SUNGA
AND ARNOLD AUSTRIA
Jagnus Design Studio

BUCK RICHNOLD SIA
Zubu Design Associates



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JASON BUENSALIDO

The principal architect and chief design ambassador of Buensalido Architects, Jason Buensalido aims to contemporise the local design scene while, using elements that remain true to Filipino culture. His design principle aims to be authentic, with an aversion for a contrived, built environment. Architecture, he believes, should be shaped by the context in which it exists, and influenced by the past, present, tradition, technology, the place, and its people. He also believes that projects should be altruistic – it should put people first and uplift the members of the community.

Buensalido's guiding principle has served him well, as his firm has managed to snag some significant accomplishments, such as multiple nominations from the Kohler Bold Design Awards, where they won the Culture Category award for its ongoing project for APT Entertainment, a movie and television producer. He and his team also won the Metrobank Arts and Design Excellence award for commercial category for The Terraces at Dao, the headquarters of a lighting equipment rental company.



SONNY SUNGA AND ARNOLD AUSTRIA

Sonny Sunga and Arnold Austria are founding partners of Jagnus Design Studio, who have earned a solid reputation for designing spaces with a modernist take, since they established their firm in 2010. Yet, it was their 2017 commendation from the National Commission for Culture and the Arts for their work on the seminal Ronac Art Center that cemented their status as two of The Philippines' brightest talents in architecture.

College classmates turned best friends, Sunga and Austria's aesthetic sensibilities are inspired by the works of masters such as Tadao Ando, Richard Meier and Steven Holl, as well as other fields such as music, art and fashion. These inspirations will be showcased in their new projects: an adult co-living space, an expansive headquarters for a distribution company, a few posh residences and a hub for start-ups. Keeping in mind their aspirations of improving people's lives and improve The Philippines' built environment, Sunga and Austria plan to infuse the local architecture scene with new ideas and perspectives for years to come.



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BUCK RICHNOLD SIA

The founder of Cebu-based Zubu Design Associates, Buck Richnold Sia follows a modernist principle when it comes to design, after having been mentored by leading architects such as Alex Medalla, Eduardo Calma, and Joey Yupangco. Each project that Zubu (named after the pre-colonial name of Cebu) undertakes features progressive and innovative design solutions, such one Sia's favorite projects: an Iligan City house that was modeled after the look of a line graph to maximise space.

While he admits that he does not have an artistic background, Sia approaches his work with a direction that dictates the structure's geometry. This he combines with what he calls "essence", or the structure's purpose. These two elements will be in play at the soon-to-launch Philippine Pavilion and Gardens at the Nanning Gardens Expo 2018 in China, a co-project with BCL Asia Landscape Architects. The pavilion promises to showcase the geology of Davao, the hometown of Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte.



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MYANMAR

WORDS
Low Shi Ping

MYA MYITZU
M.ID



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MYA MYITZU

Mya Myitzu is a Myanmarese interior design who comes highly recommended by prominent property developer Yoma Land – no surprise considering she was handpicked to design the Peninsula Residences Yangon Sales Gallery housed in a heritage villa. Founder and Creative Director of M.ID, she says she is driven by an innate curiosity of why something is done the way it is.

Myitzu describes her style as one which introduces traditional design elements in a contemporary way, "I am very much enthralled by motifs and prints and various possibilities for our culture not yet introduced in a modern setting to the world." Behind every project she does is a philosophy centred on inspiration. It could be "an homage, or an ode to something – a color, an era, sometimes even someone's style", but it should never be forced.



INDONESIA

WORDS
Praise Poh

MELISSA LIANDO
Csutoras & Liando

DANNY WICAKSONO
Studiodasar

AFAEL ARSONO
Rafael Miranti Architects



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MELISSA LIANDO

The co-founder of Csutoras & Liando, Liando is both a trained interior designer, as well as an architect. She graduated with a Bachelor degree in interior and furniture design from Australia, and a Masters in architecture from The Netherlands. Before returning to Indonesia just a few years ago, she lived and worked in Hungary, Australia, and the UK. Quoting the influential Dutch graphic designer Karel Martens, she describes her design philosophy as "not more than necessary".

Yet, the simplicity and focus in her work goes beyond just shapes and forms, as she adopts a pragmatic approach to her designs. At the same time, she attempts to create "approachable, generous, and occasionally playful spaces and objects". Constructed

in 10 days using inexpensive and locally-available materials, which were reused after the event, Kineforum Misbar, a temporary open-air cinema built as part of the 2013 Jakarta Biennale, was the perfect illustration of all that. It was also featured in MoMA's publication, Uneven growth.



DANNY WICAKSONO

Having previously worked under the guidance of acclaimed Indonesian architects Adi Purnomo and Andra Matin, the founder of Studiodasar refers to them as some of the greatest influences over his works, together with Louis Kahn, Peter Zumthor and Rem Koolhaas. His passion for well-defined, clean-cut lines and structures are evident in his creations, such as Anjung Salihara, a five-storey building dedicated to develop and nurture talents in the Salihara Community, and Anyar Market in West Java.

To Wicaksono, designing is akin to "connecting dots of solutions and other ideas, and then giving shape and form to that connections". In addition, he likes to challenge himself and his team to re-assess designs of buildings in Indonesia that are considered generic; an ongoing project called Re-generik for the studio. It is this constant drive for excellence and functionality that distinguishes his works from the usual colonial and contemporary styles used by buildings in Jakarta.



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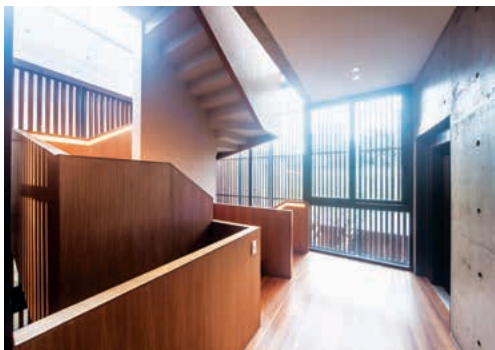


AFAEL ARSONO

Before establishing his own architectural studio Rafael Miranti Architects in 2014, Arsono had been honing his skills working in several well-known firms like Han Awal & Partners, Formwerkz Architects, and W Architects. He was also one of the resident site architects for the restoration and redevelopment of the Victoria Theater and Concert Hall in Singapore.

From the studio's first assignment, a two-storey private residence in Permata Hijau, to its most recently completed project Mother Monster, a café-resto-bar in Jakarta, Arsono has demonstrated his strong commitment to creating balance between functionality and identity through his modern and tropical architectural style.

"Whether it is an architectural project or an interior refurbishment, it must be a problem-solver that evokes certain character of place. We try to achieve this by clarifying the intention and expectation of each project through rigorous planning and a strong emphasis on material study," says Arsono.



LAOS

WORDS
Danielle Keeton-Olsen

VONGPHAI BOUNMANEE
APA



VONGPHAI BOUNMANEE

Vongphai Bounmanee founded the design, engineering and creative firm APA in 2009. Having studied architecture at the University of Laos and pursued business through the Laos-Japan Human Resource Institute, he aims to move his country toward further commercial development. This he does by creating modern, modular condominiums and malls to reflect up-and-coming urban spaces, such as a mall in the small town of Savannakhet.

However, he also greatly respects traditional Laotian design, as seen in the pointed roof and the ornate frames around windows and entryways of the Dharma Council Hall, which won the Association of Laos Architects and Civil Engineer's Best Architectural Award in 2011. Yet, while he aims to be a "representative of the current era", he admits, "My purpose is to infer Lao-ness into architectural design to make people understand what is the real identity of the country."



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THAILAND

WORDS
Sasha
Gonzales

M. L. Varudh Varavarn
Vin Varavarn Architects

JUN SEKINO
Junsekino Architect
and Design

PITUPONG CHAOWAKUL
Supermachine Studio



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M. L. VARUDH VARAVARN

For the founder of Vin Varavarn Architects, good design is not so much about style as it is about feeling. "I believe that good architecture should evoke an emotion inside us," says Varavarn, who was born into a family of architects. "However, it's not just what you see with your eyes; a beautiful building should involve all your senses and leave you with memories that last forever."

Such was the effect of The Post-Disaster School, a project Varavarn worked on in Chiang Rai to help students who were impacted by the earthquake in northern Thailand in 2014. The project was organised by the non-profit network Design for Disasters (D4D), and was awarded the 2017 Barbara Cappochin International Prize for Architecture.

Varavarn enjoys encouraging his clients to explore new ideas and possibilities. This pushes him to exceed his clients' expectations and go beyond just responding to their needs and requirements. At the moment, his firm is working on several projects, including The House of Imperfection, a single-family home made from "imperfect" materials like defective timber and secondhand formwork concrete.

"I THINK THAT ARCHITECTURE ISN'T SO MUCH ABOUT FORM AS IT IS ABOUT HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS; AND IT SHOULD SEND A MESSAGE OR RAISE AN INTERESTING ISSUE TO THE USER."

M. L. VARUDH VARAVARN, FOUNDER, VIN VARAVARN ARCHITECTS



JUN SEKINO

Looking at Jun Sekino's residential project designs, one cannot help but admire their clean lines, modern tropical vibe and minimalist aesthetic. Take for instance Brick House, which was built to look like a brick box with a little house inside, or Nature House, which uses plenty of wood and boasts water features in and around the property.

But Sekino is the first to admit that he does not adhere to any particular design credo. "My aim with every project is to see what's possible," says the architect, who established his firm in 2010. "Then, we look for the best materials to bring the project to life. We start with very basic elements, adapting them along the way according to the context."

Sekino adds that he doesn't really look to other architects for inspiration. "I hardly look at others' projects because for me, it's about doing what's right for the project I'm working on and believing in the decisions I make. I've found that in order to get a client to believe in what I'm doing, I have to first be satisfied with my own work."



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PITUPONG CHAOWAKUL (JACK)

The architect and founder of Supermachine Studio is the creative mind behind 10 Cal Tower, a red concrete labyrinth playground in Bangsaen, a seaside town in eastern Thailand, and the award-winning Hubba-To, a co-working space in Bangkok that features neon blue tubes suspended from its ceiling. But, as unusual as these projects look, don't try to define them. "I don't have a particular design philosophy," says Chaowakul, who also goes by the nickname Jack. "If anything, my work is inspired by environmental, social and political issues and whatever is happening around me."

Supermachine Studio's projects are diverse, ranging from installations and exhibitions to shopping malls and large outdoor music festivals. The one thing they have in common is that they are playful-yet-practical and honest in their expression. "I like to think that architects work the same way writers or singers do. It's our job to tell a story, but while writers use words and singers use lyrics, architects use building materials. We just employ a different medium to reflect our ideas and experiences."



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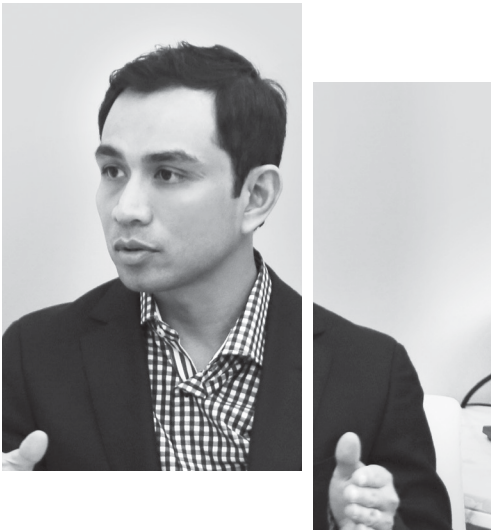


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BRUNEI

WORDS
Low Shi Ping

NIZAM WAHAB
OWMP International



NIZAM WAHAB

One of the most interesting projects Nizam Wahab is working on right now is the new building for the central bank of Brunei Darussalam. The Principal and Founder of OWMP International attributes its architecture to be international, mixed with a Bruneian context. In a way, the project is also reflective of his own career path, where he worked with different firms in London and at home, before setting up his own practice.

"My design style is always influenced by the context and environment of a place, form, method of construction, building materials and regional character," Wahab explains. "It ranges all the time and depends on the client, the end-user and most importantly the budget." This is why to him, good design does not need to be expensive or extravagant. Inspiration for projects strike at different times, such as during his travels to places like Denmark and Sweden, wandering through a museum, or even at conferences the likes of the World Architecture Festival.

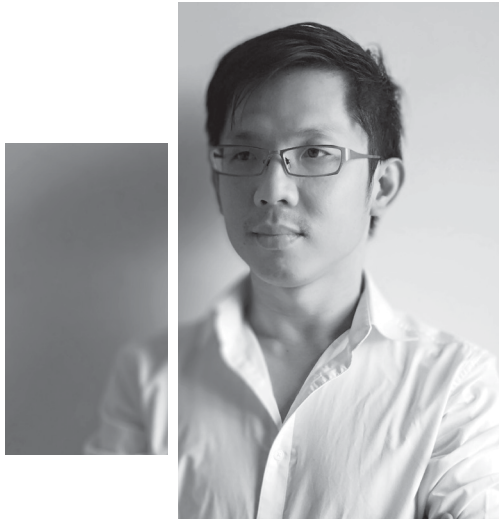
MALAYSIA

WORDS
Nizar Musa

LEE CHERNG YIH
Formzero

MAK THUR PEI
Mak Arkitek Konsult

CHUA YHEU-SHEN
Kohn Pederson Fox



LEE CHERNG YIH

Transitioning through more universities and firms than any normal architect would in a lifetime, Lee Cherng Yih is both canny practitioner and savvy educator. From Australia to China, to the UK and back, Lee cut his teeth in offices such as BAU, Alsop Louie Partners, Studio Egret West and GDP, before forming his own studio, Formzero, in 2012. This year, with a team of collaborators, he jointly won the Master Builders Association of Malaysia (MBAM) headquarters design competition.

Lee's philosophy of content- and concept-driven design is characterised by stylish yet subtle statements that break normative perceptions of spaces and structures, none more apparent than his PAM Award-commended Window House (as featured in d+a's Issue 104) and the spectacular Red Hill Gallery with MOA. These sheer polygonal buildings, plus others, also showcase his growing interest in shaping landscapes, which together with passive design, forms his commitment to sustainable approaches. On top of building commissions, he continues the time-honoured tradition of participating in competitions, by far the best way of honing craft that leads to potentially more visual delights.



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MAK THUR PEI

Mak Thur Pei was born into the profession. Having an architect father, she was raised in an environment of professional practice (school holiday afternoons were spent colouring ammonia blueprints with her brother). Little surprise then that she picked up the baton (or scale rule in this instance), graduated with high distinction from the University of Western Australia and joined her father's firm. Their recently completed T1@Bundusan project, which received a PAM Award commendation, was conceived while Mak was on summer break.

Mak believes good design isn't merely a show of aesthetics. Her pragmatic erudite style, with a focus on uplifting spatial experiences, can be seen throughout the T1 project: pure geometries form interconnected spaces and volumes, accentuated by glass, and coloured and textured surfaces. And while commercial and industrial projects dominate her portfolio, more recent investigations into hospitality design may yet reveal other facets of this talented Sabah-based architect.



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CHUA YHEU-SHEN

To have the chaps from Foster + Partners knock on your door, after barely two years on an Architectural Association scholarship, you'd have to be some sort of design prodigy. Chua Yheu-Shen is one of the youngest architects ever to charter with the Royal Institute of British Architects. Having served at Foster + Partners upon graduation, he went on to join Kohn Pederson Fox, where he worked on high-rise projects and, as project architect, delivered one of London's tallest and newest landmarks, the South Bank Tower – all this before the ripe old age of 30.

His designs are reflective of inquisitive and contrarian thinking; gestures are simultaneously unorthodox yet succinct, interspersed with fenestrated details found in his earliest student designs to the joint-won MBAM design contest (in collaboration with CY Chan Architect), which features a massive gravity-defying frame supporting a host of spaces above. With a penchant for the mega-scaled, you'll find in his portfolio art platforms, cultural hubs and mass housing, among others.



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VIETNAM

WORDS
Michele Koh
Morollo

IMAGES
Tuan Dao Studio,
Hiroyuki Oki, Thiet
Vu, Hirojuki, and
Huynh Tran Viet Uy

LEE CHERNG YIH
Formzero

MAK THUR PEI
Mak Arkitek Konsult

CHUA YHEU-SHEN
Kohn Pederson Fox



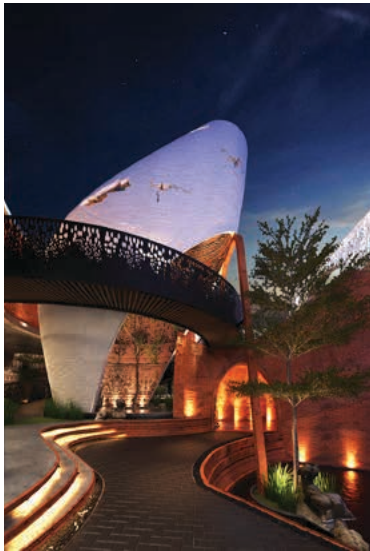
LE HUNG TRONG

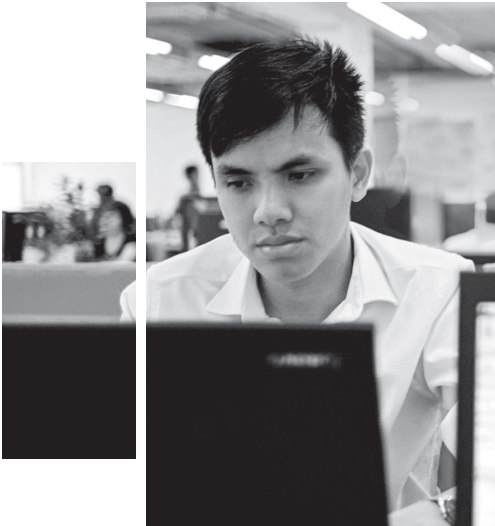
Founded in 2015 by architect Le Hung Trong, Ho Chi Minh City-based studio Le House has completed a handful of outstanding modern F&B projects that incorporate traditional Vietnamese design elements such as rustic brick walls, courtyards, and plenty of greenery. These include An 'Garden – a three-level café in Hanoi inspired by hanging gardens, and No. 1986 Café – a striking cafe in Haiphong City with a bold, glass and perforated brick façade. With residences such as Ha House in Hanoi's Old Street, Le applies the philosophy of "wabi-sabi" to harmonise modern architecture with the historic cityscape.

"To be creative, designers should not be bound by definitions. When I design a living room for instance, I try to forget or dismiss living room 'rules' that say where the furniture items should go. This allows me to create new and interesting layouts," says Le who is currently working on a vegetarian restaurant in Quang Tri city, that's inspired by Champa architecture.



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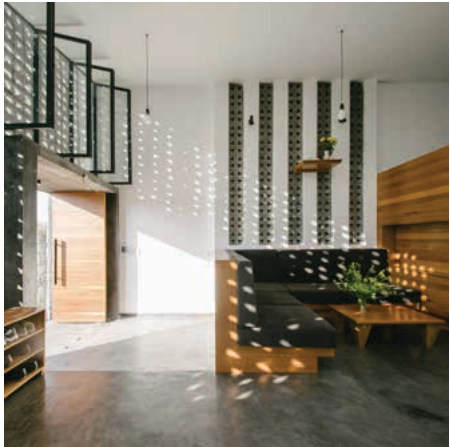


HUYNH ANH TUAN

Established in 2015 by architect Huynh Anh Tuan, Ho Chi Minh City-based practice KHUON Studio's intriguing projects include 2.5 House, a modest 2.5-by-6.5-square-metre residence that satisfied all its owner's living requirements. Its success won KHUON Studio many more clients who were looking to maximise their small plots.

"We completed other similar projects in Ho Chi Minh City – such as 18 House in an alley in Ho Chi Minh – with a consistent focus on the optimisation of functional space in Vietnam's characteristically cramped urban sites," says Huynh who is currently working on several small residences in Ho Chi Minh.

Fascinated by the contemporary works of architects from the 1960s such as Ngo Viet Thu, Huynh explains that one particular feature of Saigon buildings from that period was elaborate breeze bricks. These have become a signature element in KHUON Studio projects, such as Kon Tum House with a façade constructed with more than 2,000 blocks.



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MY AN

In 2009, Hanoi architecture practice My An Pham Thi teamed up with French architect Michael Charruault and founded MM++ Architects. Based in Ho Chi Minh City, their works are influenced by context, spatial experience, and Vietnam's tropical climate.

"Each of our projects has a 'story' made of these elements that we manipulate. The truth is, we would love to live ourselves in every house we have designed," says My An, who is responsible for the initial drawings and visuals.

"We try to avoid being overly demonstrative, and prefer to create spaces that have longevity, and that will encourage a feeling of wellness and balance for our clients," says Charruault.

Their works, which include houses with vertical green walls and grass roofs, are often a celebration of modern, tropical living. "When we work on renovation projects, we like to see how far we can go with changes and alterations to improve a home," says Charruault.



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SINGAPORE

WORDS
Low Shi Ping

GOH CHIOH HUI
Studioigoto

CHERIN TAN
LAANK

LAWRENCE LER
Gensler



GOH CHIOH HUI

"Architecture is secondary to the environment it sits on. It should be understated and respectful of context." This is a strong belief of Goh Chioh Hui (who also goes by the moniker Chiok) that is reflected in the projects he designs through studioigoto, a practice he co-founded with Kimberly Toh. He illustrates his point by referencing a project sited on a cliff overlooking the sea. While most would take the chance to design something dramatic, he preferred to insert the building into the sub-terrain and preserve the silhouette of the cliff-scape.

This explains why he sees his designs as being part of a larger picture within the whole context. "It is ironical indeed, that you would rather your design not stand out formally, but quietly linking various components of the context together. Subtlety is the hardest form of design," he replies, when asked how his work differs from other designers.



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CHERIN TAN

As a child, she willingly gave up watching cartoons to attend art classes. So, it comes as little surprise that Cherin Tan grew up to become an architect. Formerly from renowned interior design firm Asylum, she later left to set up LAANK, prompted by the desire to make a difference to the industry. Its meticulous design approach to each project combines spatial and practical functionality with craftsmanship and aesthetics – all with the intention of bringing results to the table of its clients.

"We try to marry usability, functionality, and aesthetics to create beautiful, stylish architectural interiors that give a holistic experience based on the philosophy of developing meticulously considered designs according to each project's unique characteristics," she says. One of the most well-known examples is Violet Oon's restaurants, where Peranakan influences are imbued with modern elegance. She says she is inspired by her team, where she enjoys feeding off their energy, supporting their ideas and turning them into reality.



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LAWRENCE LER

Lawrence Ler has worked on a wide variety of projects over the span of his almost 20-year career as an architect. These include a residential building in Kazakhstan, master plans for Cambodia and in Singapore, the Henderson Waves. The Design Director of Gensler admits to enjoying the process of design making, “[It] gives me the scope to design everything, from as big as a city or a school campus to small objects like a door handle.”

As urbanisation takes place and more land becomes privatised, he finds himself wondering how to ensure public spaces still get enjoyed. “It is important for architects to try not to isolate their designs as private projects but rather, view them as opportunities to contribute positively to the public environment in both tangible and intangible ways.” This, he feels, is important as design is also an everyday interaction, “It is not about creating a standalone beautiful object, it is not about me.”

“[DESIGN] HAS TO HAVE MEANING AND IT STARTS FROM LOOKING AT THE WIDER CONTEXT, WHERE WE DRAW REFERENCES FROM THE SITE AND HISTORY, AND THEN LOOKING AT THE PRESENT CONSTRAINTS TO DESIGN FOR THE FUTURE. IT HAS TO INTERACT WITH THE SURROUNDINGS AND THE PEOPLE WHO ARE GOING TO USE THE BUILDINGS.”

LAWRENCE LER, DESIGN DIRECTOR, GENSLER



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