

# HOME & DECOR

SINGAPORE

THE FESTIVE EDITION

SOLAR PANEL RENTAL FOR LOWER BILLS

EXCLUSIVE

Steve Leung: Humanist approach to interior design

## TIME TO GATHER

HOME ENTERTAINING HACKS FOR SMALL SPACES

CHEAT SHEET FOR WHIPPING UP A CELEBRATORY FEAST

ON-TREND MOODBOARDS FOR FUSS-FREE DECORATING

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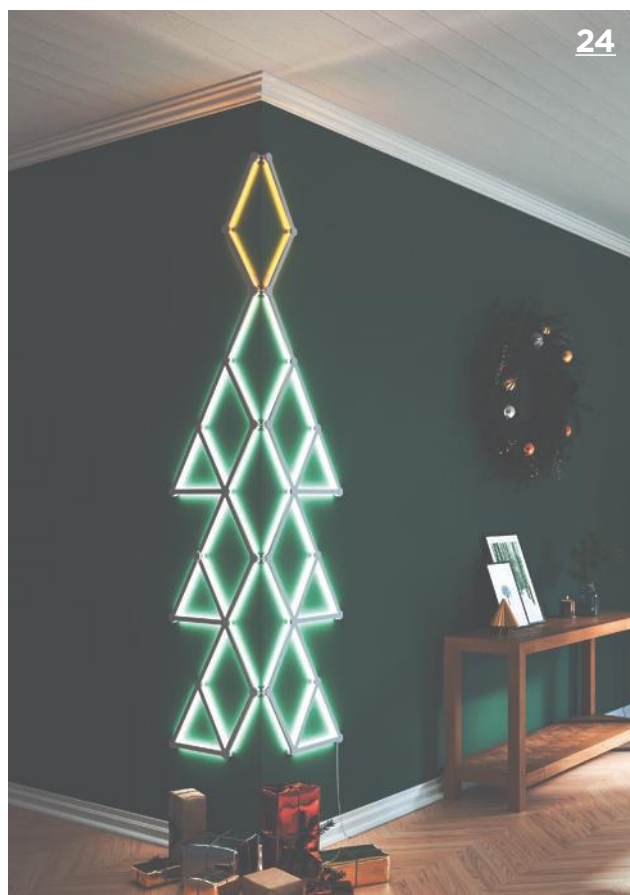
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# DESIGN

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION FROM THOSE IN THE KNOW

## HUMAN-CENTRED DESIGN

Veteran Hong Kong architect and designer Steve Leung explains to Y-JEAN MUN-DELSALLE about placing human beings at the heart of his works and how his personal motto, "Enjoy Life, Enjoy Design", is so ingrained within him that design is a truly essential component of his day-to-day living. To Steve Leung, design is about doing the right thing at the right time in the right context and striking an "appropriate" balance between aesthetics and functionality. The goal is to serve people in the best possible way by addressing contemporary society's issues and improving their quality of life. ▶



Reflecting his Asian roots, his works reference the Golden Mean from ancient Chinese philosophy, which seeks the beauty of moderation between two spectrums and harmony between human beings and nature. He explains his human-centred approach: “Good design can be such a powerful tool to overcome challenges for the greatest good of our community and planet. Employing eco-friendly, reusable building materials and finishings, creating more green spaces, encouraging heritage preservation and revitalisation and so on, are some ways each designer can help ease societal and environmental challenges.”

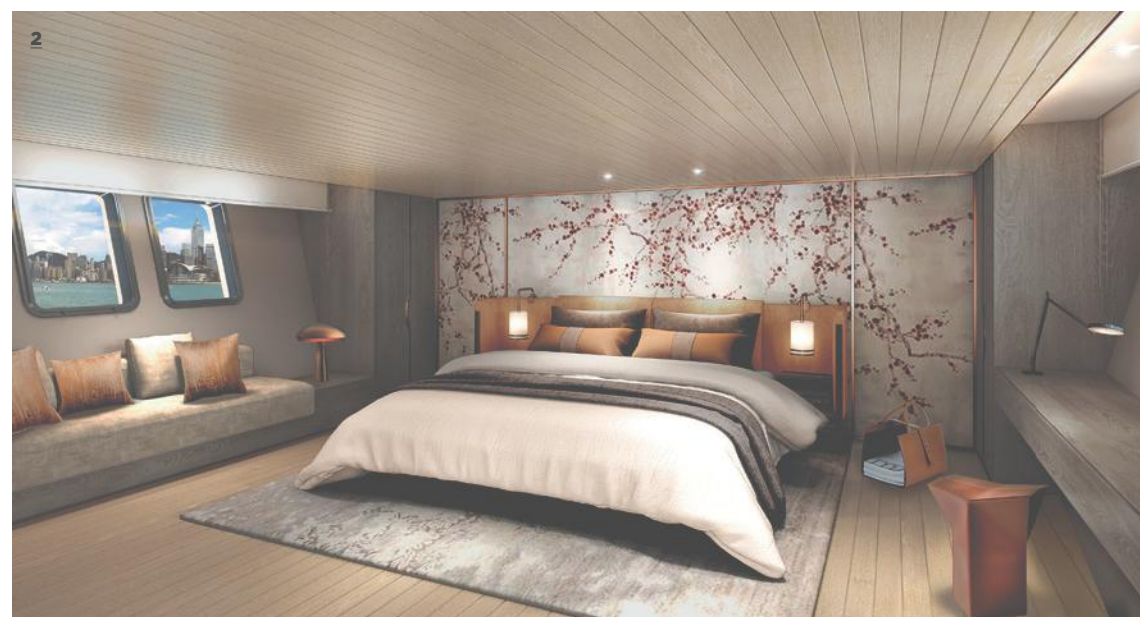
**Boundless Vision**

Today at the helm of a design empire encompassing 12 brands creating luxury residences, serviced apartments, hotels, restaurants, commercial and office spaces, homes for the aged, and medical and healthcare facilities, the entrepreneur has always believed in “design without limits”, and central to his vision is diversification.

After having focused on residential design early in his career, when his friend and branding maestro Alan Chan asked him to partner with him on the 2003 rebranding of Hong Kong fast-food chain Fairwood – among the three leading local players in the market – along with Japanese interior designer Yasumichi Morita, he jumped at the chance. Its phenomenal success put them on the map and became a case study on



photo OWEN RAGGETT



**“ARCHITECTURAL, INTERIOR AND PRODUCT DESIGN PROJECTS ARE ALWAYS THE OUTCOMES OF COLLECTIVE EFFORTS IN BRAINSTORMING THE BEST IDEAS, PLANNING A SMART WORKING STRATEGY AND CREATING A DESIGN THAT CAN MEET THE CLIENT’S NEEDS.”**

how branding on a three-dimensional scale through spatial design could save a business.

A decade later, he became the first Chinese creative director of the real estate firm YOO, founded by John Hitchcox and Philippe Starck, and launched Hong Kong’s first YOO residence. Teaming up with other industry tastemakers soon became one of his key strengths, for example, his 2018 milestone collaboration with Kengo Kuma on Ta-ke, Kuma’s first-ever restaurant design in Hong Kong.

up his consultancy at the age of 30, which he restructured as Steve Leung Architects Ltd. and Steve Leung Designers Ltd. A decade later, he became one of the first Hong Kong designers to recognise the extraordinary potential of the Mainland Chinese market in the mid-’90s. Many of his early clients still collaborate with him today, playing an important role in his success in China and globally.

“Besides seizing the right opportunity at the right time, my success would not have been possible without the significant contribution of my talented design teams,” Steve notes. “Architectural, interior and product design projects are always the outcomes of collective efforts in brainstorming the best ideas, planning a smart working strategy and creating a design that can meet the client’s needs. This is something I truly believe in – the power of opportunity and the dynamic of teamwork.”

**Building a Legacy**

Born in Hong Kong in 1957, Steve knew from age 10 that he would become an architect, following in his uncle’s footsteps, whom he had observed working late into the night on his drawings.

“My parents, especially my mother, trusted my choices and allowed me to pursue my dream career with freedom,” he recalls. “For this, I am eternally grateful. My parents have been my biggest mentors. They taught me to pursue the quality of life rather than social status or money.”

After studying architecture and urban planning at the University of Hong Kong, he set

**Universal Empire**

Counting 600 employees under his leadership, the Steve Leung Design Group handles up to 300 projects annually. The company’s works have

1. The recreation lounge at Wilmar International Headquarters in Singapore.

2. The red bedroom onboard of Sanlorenzo’s SX88 yacht.

3. The Pinghu Baoneng City Exhibition Hall in Shenzhen.

4. The sleek interior of McDonald’s CUBE Chengdu flagship.



**“ THE HARDEST THING IN DESIGN IS ACHIEVING THE BALANCE OF STAYING TRUE TO YOUR OWN DESIGN VISION AND LANGUAGE, YET KEEPING A FLEXIBLE MINDSET TOWARDS THE CLIENT AND FINAL USER’S NEEDS.”**



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appeared in over 100 cities, and it has collaborated with international home decor brands like Visionnaire, Villeroy & Boch, Kohler, Bisazza, Neutra, Sanlorenzo, Swarovski and Riva 1920.

Steve’s process is one of careful analysis. After reviewing the client’s brief, he examines the project’s positioning, geographical location, target users and the specific space’s features.

“A designer should never start his creative process without a logical understanding of the project at large,” he states. “It is crucial to be fully aware of your client’s needs, especially the limitations and strengths of each project. I believe the hardest thing in design is achieving the balance of staying true to your own design vision and language, yet keeping a flexible mindset towards the client and final user’s needs by providing a design outcome that can cater to these specific requirements whilst holding solid aesthetic value.”

**A Moment to Think**

With the pandemic slowing down his work schedule, Steve could spend more time with his family, and thus Club C+ private members’ club was born in collaboration with his son Nicholas. Unable to find a social lounge in Hong Kong that brought together the finest things in life – such as exquisite cuisine and wines, rare cigars and art pieces – under one roof, they decided to fill a market gap in Hong Kong’s hospitality and entertainment scene.

It was the ideal opportunity for them to create an exclusive home away from home where connoisseurs could indulge and connect with one another,



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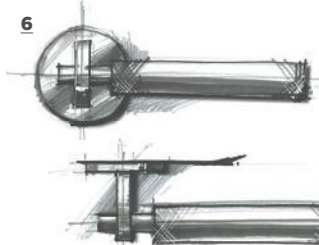
and for father and son to bond. Unlike most private clubs in Hong Kong that feature old-school British interiors, Club C+ blends contemporary Chinese design and British touches in a speakeasy-inspired venue.

His practice’s recent projects include an upscale restaurant in Mandarin Oriental Saigon in Ho Chi Minh City, a Qeelin flagship store in Ginza, Tokyo, The Londoner Macao hotel, the renovation of suites at Marina Bay Sands in Singapore and Address Harbour Point mixed-use development at Dubai Creek Harbour.

As he turned 65 this year, Steve is finally taking a step back, having learnt to delegate responsibility. “I am unable to personally manage every single project, even when I feel intrigued by the design scope and brief,” he laments. “When this happens, I do feel a tiny bit of regret, but I have learnt

how to handle this feeling and to find the right balance. There is a Chinese saying, ‘You de bi you shi (有得必有失), meaning that if you gain something, then you will also have to give something up in return: you can’t have it all.’

Having joined hands with nine interior designers from mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan to establish C Foundation, the first non-profit foundation in the area to promote design education, in 2014, he is allocating more energy to giving back to society. “My desire is to share my own experience, knowledge and passion with the rest of the design community, especially with younger creatives,” he concludes. “I hope to bring a positive impact to the next generation of designers, passing on the spirit and inspiring them to make our industry flourish.” ■



5. Steve and Mike Simpson (left), Group Managing Director of Simpson Marine for Sanlorenzo

6. Sketches of Valli&Valli’s Fusital H377 Serie SL Duemilasedici door handle.

7. & 9. Sarin Low Table and Deimos sofa designed for Visionnaire.

8. The Ying door collection designed for Lualdi.



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**KEY DESIGNS**



photo XXXIN RICARD

**1. SYMPHONY BAY**

Steve Leung’s first attempt at designing high-end residential interiors for a show flat, 1997’s Symphony Bay was his breakthrough project that triggered a style shift in the industry. He proposed a contemporary aesthetic rather than the classical style that was popular at the time. While incorporating musical elements, it paid tribute to nature through animal-shaped curios and a wide variety of woods instead of wallpaper, paint or marble for wall decoration.

**2. ONE PARK SHANGHAI**

Drawing inspiration from luxury-lifestyle brand Armani, the sumptuous, four-storey apartment features a palette of browns and beiges, expanses of marble, wooden furnishings and upholstered or hand-woven leather walls, blending many neutral finishes with more dramatic elements.

**3. VALLI&VALLI FUSITAL H377 SERIE SL DUEMILASEDICI**

Having collaborated with the likes of Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid, Valli&Valli tapped Leung to produce a collection of door handles in various finishes



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photo XXXIN RICARD

**4. MCDONALD’S CUBE CONCEPT**

The new design scheme for McDonald’s, inspired by the cubic shape, motifs and colours of its kids’ Happy Meal, was implemented in its Chengdu, Shenzhen and Shanghai flagship restaurants and will soon expand to Europe and Australia.

**5. CLUB C+ PRIVATE SOCIAL LOUNGE**

The one-stop lifestyle destination masterminded by Steve and his son Nicholas brings together life’s best pleasures: exquisite Cantonese cuisine, fine wines, premium cigars and artworks.