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## SANDRA NG & COBA CHENG

ON THE POWER OF  
LOCAL STORIES

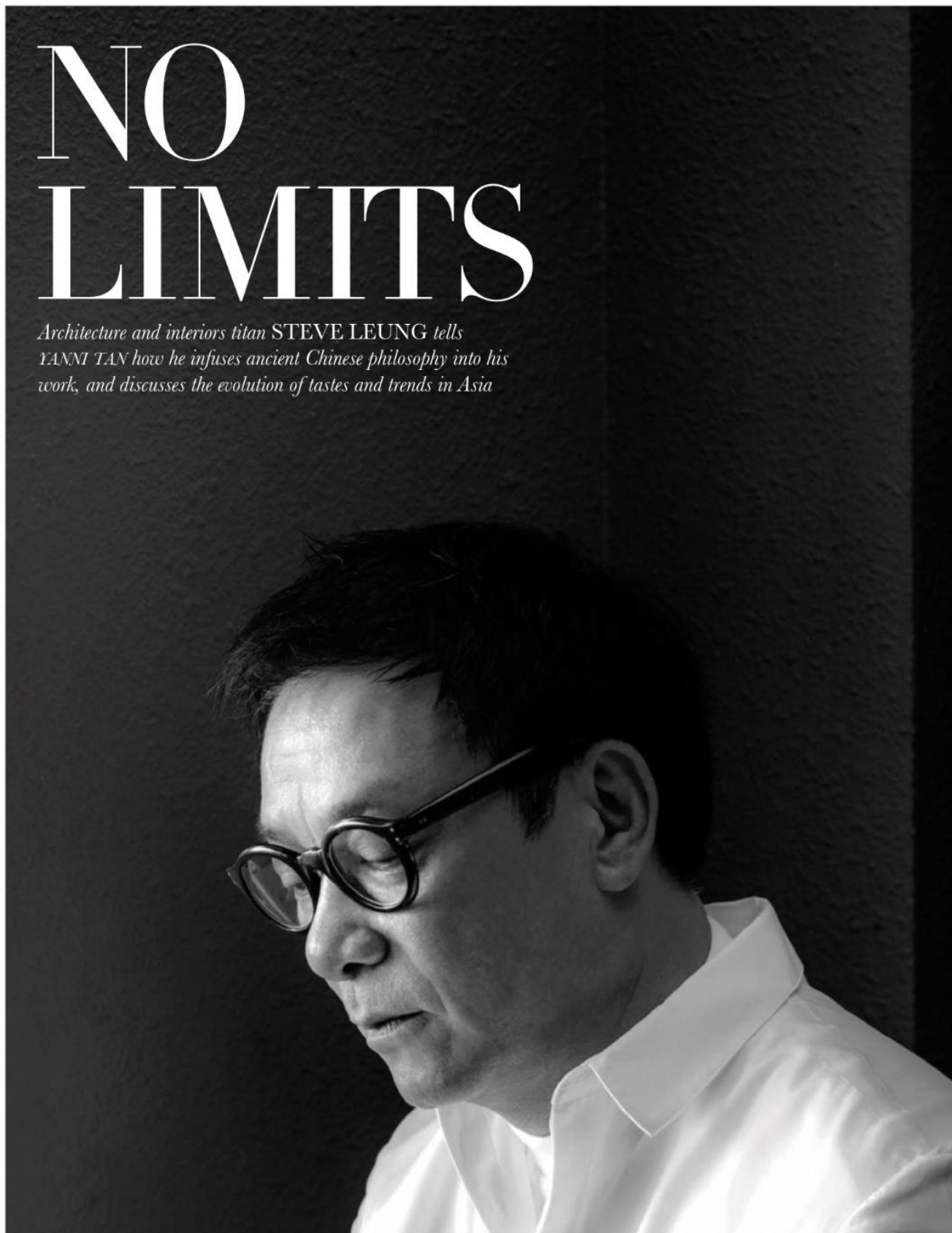


THE FILM ISSUE

CHLOÉ ZHAO • JUJU CHAN SZETO • MIKE FIGGIS • BIPIN KARMA

# NO LIMITS

*Architecture and interiors titan STEVE LEUNG tells  
YANNI TAN how he infuses ancient Chinese philosophy into his  
work, and discusses the evolution of tastes and trends in Asia*





Steve Leung's motto, "Enjoy Life, Enjoy Design", may be a simple one, but it's won him global recognition. After starting out vetting plans as a government building surveyor and then wearing multiple hats at a firm of property developers, the Hong Kong-born architect went solo aged 30 in 1987. Since then, he's soared.

Today, his Steve Leung Design Group is listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, and comprises 13 brands that span architecture, interiors and product design, interior decorating and furnishing. It's been recognised four times as the world's leading residential design firm by *Interior Design* magazine, and has won more than 210 international design and corporate awards. Although its dual headquarters are in Hong Kong and Shanghai, with branch offices in Beijing and Guangzhou, the group has completed projects in 100 cities around the world.

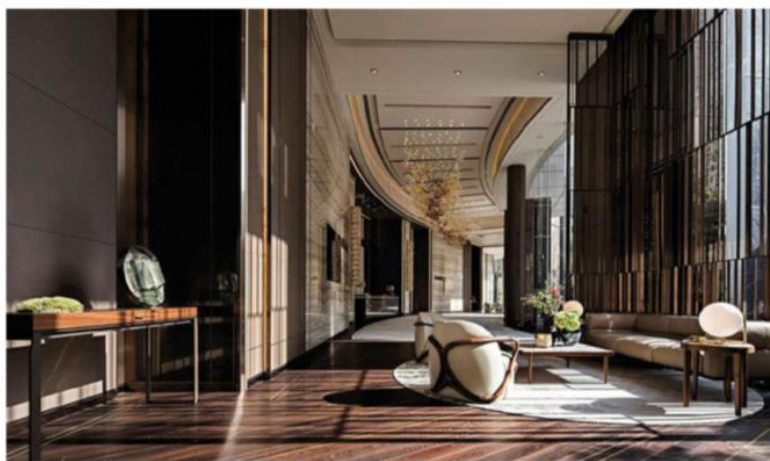
Yet the man who founded a corporation that now employs more than 500 people and can rightly be called a "starchitect" describes his signature style as being merely "simple, elegant and functional".

"My design reflects my own way of living," says Leung, "which is simple yet refined, practical yet with an artistic sensibility. Many people would describe my style as minimalist, though I believe I employ the creativity to explore different styles and to design without constraints. A contemporary aesthetic and clean lines, with subtle Asian touches and details hinting to my Asian roots add sophistication to my work."

In the following pages and in his own words, Leung shares his inspirations, visions and trend forecasts.

## CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

The essence of traditional Chinese philosophy and principles tie in with my design thinking and approach. I believe that good design is human-centred – it seeks a perfect balance between aesthetics and functionality to serve people in the best way possible. Harmony between human and nature is another key element that exemplifies my holistic approach through the generous employment of natural materials and full-length doors and windows to bring the natural landscape into the interiors. My designs are also characterised by the Golden Mean, which can be roughly translated as "beauty of moderation between two spectrums", imparting a refined quality to upscale projects, such as the Royal Pavilion in Shanghai, through the approach of understated luxury.



THE POOL AND DECK AT THE ROYAL PAVILION. ABOVE RIGHT: A SITTING AREA AT THE ROYAL PAVILION



## THE MEANING OF HOME

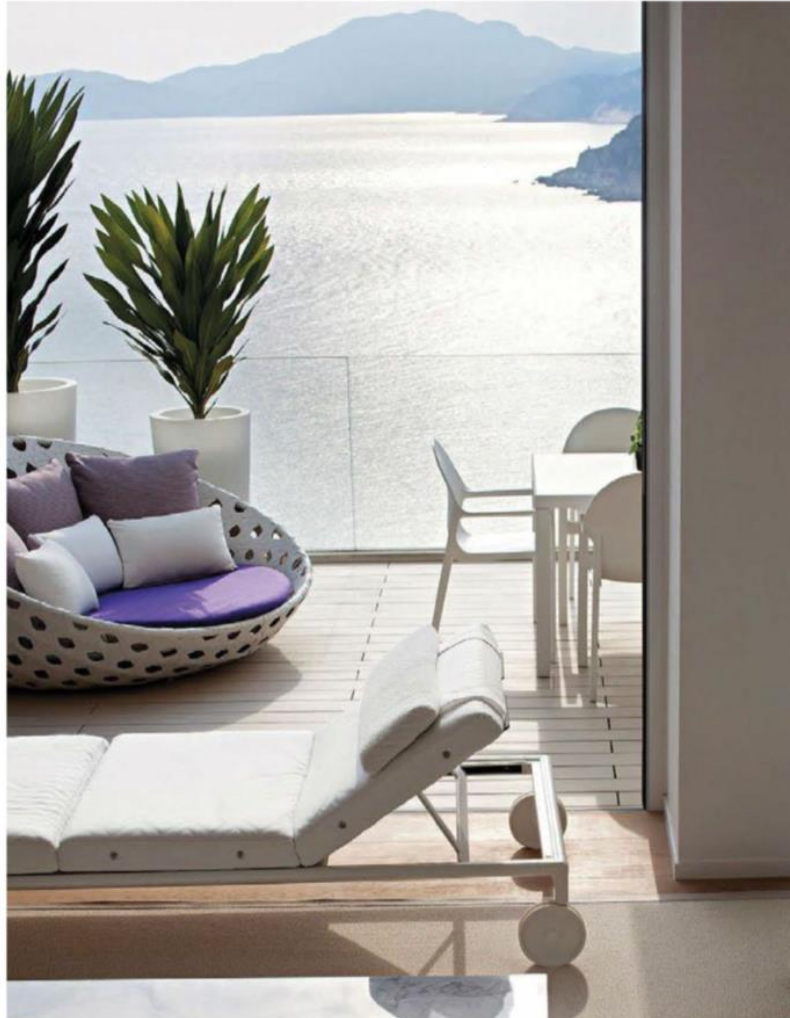
Since the earliest days of my childhood, I've always been a true nature lover. I especially adore the sea and, whenever possible, I've always chosen to live in proximity with the ocean. My current home is a step away from the sea, allowing me to enjoy its stunning beauty every day. I believe natural landscapes have a healing power that relieves us from the stress of our hectic lives. For my former residence in Hong Kong's Ocean Bay, I tried my best to embody all the design principles I abide by: the natural scenery has been infused within the space, complemented by soothing white shades and contemporary lines to convey a sense of brightness and serenity that's much-needed after a long day of work.

## ULTIMATE PERSONALISATION

With work-from-home policies widely applied worldwide, and considered a default in many urban cities, design is already setting a new trend in creating dedicated work spaces within our homes. I foresee an even higher degree of customisation in our living space, unfolding new opportunities in how we conceive our usual working experience and habits at home. The past two years have also drawn interest in private and highly personalised lifestyle experiences. Following the current travel and social restrictions, the Asian market witnessed an unexpected demand in customising bespoke luxury yachts, which are seen as deluxe floating villas, especially to the younger generation of Asian owners.

## BACK TO NATURE

In coming years, the interior design industry will embrace the eco-friendly lifestyle through a more holistic approach. By gradually encouraging biophilic and sustainable practices, design will prompt a more widespread employment of natural materials and elements, reconnecting humans with nature within the built environments, especially for those living in today's urban jungles.



THIS PAGE: STEVE LEUNG'S FORMER HOME IN OCEAN BAY. OPPOSITE PAGE: FROM TOP: THE PARTY ROOM AND RECEPTION AREA OF THE MOORGEN SMART HOME EXPERIENCE CENTER





### SMART LIVING

Smart technologies will also become more universal, with the Internet of Things changing the way we conceive design by providing a higher degree of customisation. Recently, we partnered with Moorgen, a global leading manufacturer pioneering smart home systems, to launch the Moorgen Smart Home Experience Center in Guangzhou's Louvre Furnishing Art Center. Inspired by the human touch and cutting-edge technology, its design integrates Moorgen smart home systems into the living environment. By adopting smart solutions for air conditioning and energy, adjustable lighting and home appliances (such as curtains, doors and audio equipment), the overall design approach is focused on long-term sustainability. It shapes an environmentally friendly, comfortable and personalised environment that perfectly exemplifies tomorrow's living.

### MASTERY OF SPACE

The need for increased space flexibility will also set a new trend in the industry. For instance, in the post-Covid era, homes will rely on a space designed to be extra flexible and multi-functional, blurring the lines of traditional dynamics between our homes and workplaces. Homes will also become the space to enjoy a new way of socialising, with dedicated areas for networking and entertaining. Another good example from the Moorgen Smart Home Experience Center could be its ultra-modern theatre and party room that integrate high-tech equipment and systems to offer an immersive entertainment experience that emulates the setting of professional venues.



### THE NEW ASIAN HOME

In the past, specifically for Asian homes, there was a general tendency to prefer a Western classical design approach, as clients believed this specific aesthetic would better portray their affluence. This perception has since changed a lot. In recent years, I've witnessed a subtle shift from a mere "materialistic" luxury approach to a more holistic lifestyle at large, which treasures indicators of quality of life such as fresh air, abundant natural light and green scenery. The global pandemic has added a new focus to design principles, so that sustainability and well-being are now priorities.



## CULTURAL FLAVOURS

YOO8 Residences Serviced by Kempinski, our debut project in Malaysia, is right in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, overlooking the Petronas Twin Towers. It was vital for me to bring a new and unexpected benchmark into the local market, and I believe this project is evidence of how exceptional residences can blend the best of contemporary design, quality service and urban lifestyle, while also integrating local cultural flavours within the space. It was a unique experience to work at 8 Conlay (the mixed-use development where YOO8 is located) and interact with our collaborators who, to our biggest surprise, also spoke Cantonese. This language affinity sparked an instant connection that eased the communication and collaboration process.

## DESIGNING FOR WELLNESS

In the last few years, in part also due to the strong impact of the pandemic, design principles such as sustainability and well-being have become essential, with green building standards like LEED and WELL increasingly requested and adopted. I hope to see Asia take on a more leading approach towards this green direction, truly implementing design as a powerful tool to tackle societal and environmental challenges





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:  
KITCHEN AND LIVING ROOM  
OF A UNIT AT YOO8 RESIDENCES  
SERVICED BY KEMPINSKI IN  
KUALA LUMPUR; THE HONG  
KONG HEADQUARTERS OF  
STEVE LEUNG DESIGN; PING  
AN FINANCE CENTER; MASTER  
BEDROOM AT ONE SHENZHEN  
BAY



for the greatest good of our communities and planet. At Steve Leung Design, we're committed to spearheading wellness design in Asia by exploring a more humanised and holistic paradigm. For example, our headquarters in Hong Kong has been recognised as a WELL-certified Gold project in 2019, excelling in seven categories of building performance – Air, Water, Light, Nourishment, Fitness, Comfort and Mind, materialising what we regard as “good design”.

#### CITY OF THE FUTURE

I'd have to say it's the Greater Bay Area, which encompasses an area of about 56,000sqkm, and a population of more than 72 million. The surroundings also combine technology and infrastructural excellence, becoming a great source of inspiration for today's contemporary design scene in Asia. We've developed quite a number of projects there and among them I'd like to mention One Shenzhen Bay, which redefines the quality of urban living by introducing understated luxury and contemporary design in collaboration with renowned foreign designers. Another exciting project is the FreeSky Observation Deck at Ping An Finance Centre, the tallest building and landmark in Shenzhen. Inspired by the moving

clouds seen from the top of the skyscraper, the observation deck offers a cinematic and futuristic experience for visitors to the top floor. Across the delta in Zhuhai, adjacent to the avant-garde Zhuhai Opera House, we designed a mesmerising club space, with interiors that have been conceptualised around futuristic elements and technicolour neon, immersing visitors in a multi-sensorial, illusory experience. 