

Interconnecting people
and making places

17 March 2022

onebite
ASEAN Design Forum
Siu Hei Court Play Space

www.onebitedesign.com

Good afternoon everyone, I'm Alan, co-founder and managing director from One Bite Design Studio. Thank you very much for having me here to share our Siu Hei Court Play Space project from Hong Kong.

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HONG KONG | SINGAPORE

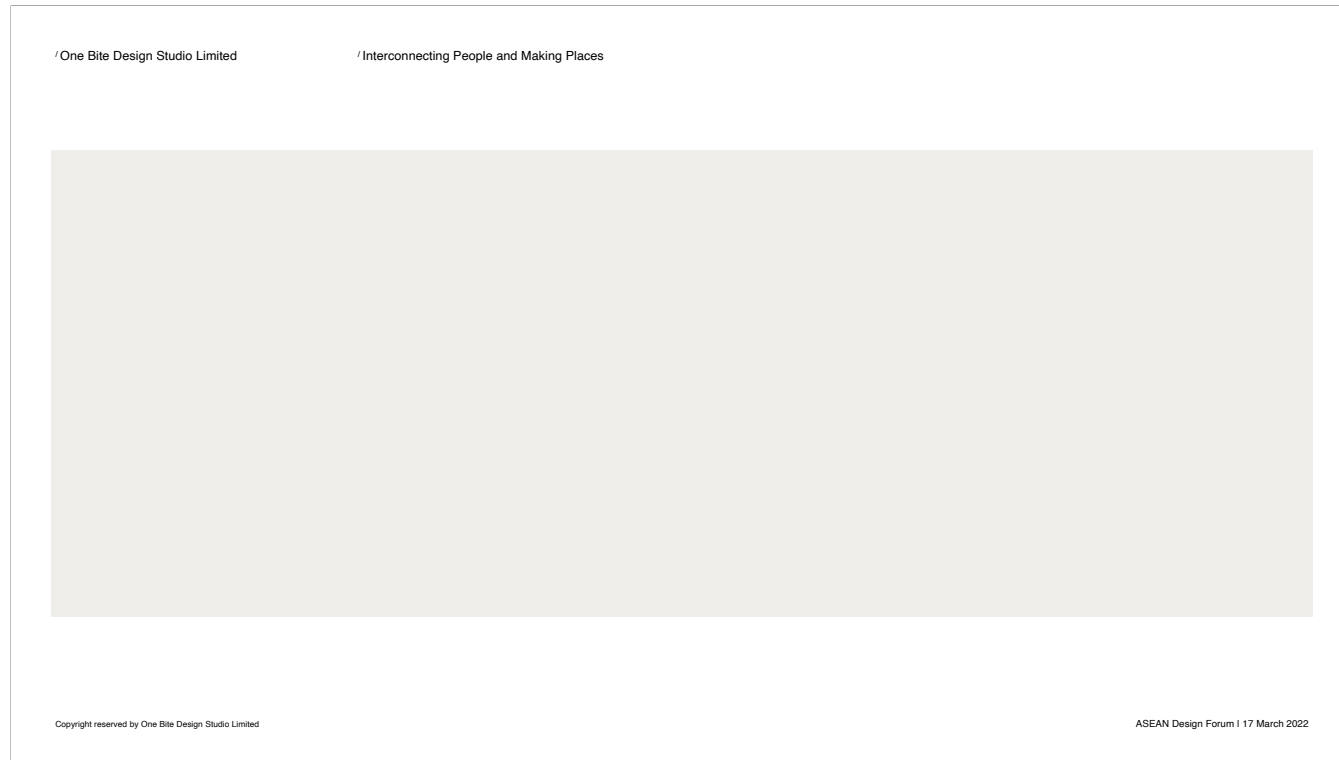
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Let me give you a brief background of who we are. One Bite is an architecture-based multidisciplinary design company. We aim to create positive impact through design and our headquarter is in Hong Kong with an office in Singapore.



Does anyone recognise this logo? It represents a B Corp Certification which measures from the social, environmental performance, to legal commitment, and to its transparency in running the business. Fortunately, we are the first certified architectural office in Hong Kong. Up to now, there are around 4,600 certified B Corps around the world.



Let's take a look at this short animation. We create, we observe, we take action and we bite. One Bite has 4 arms, which is Design, Social, Research and Attic. We believe the power of interconnecting people which would lead to the making of a place that everyone enjoys and loves.



This is the exterior view of our office occupying 2 floors with our lovely colleagues. It is actually a ground shop, just doorstep to the local community that we love. Behind us it is a street that is full of antiques! At the same time, we also noticed the transformation of our neighbourhood with lots of new cafes and restaurants being emerged.

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The Team

Diversity of Team Backgrounds



Alan Cheung

Sarah Mui

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Lung Mak



April Kwok



Diana Pang



Ian Tan



Ashlyn Kwong



Sherman Sun



Eleanor Fu



Jane Lam



Vivian Tsoi



Brenda Hui



Eva Cheung



Ceas Chong



Kimberley Wong



Raine Wong



Gemma Chan



Zoey Yuan



Alice Wan



Arnold Ng



Kelly Tang



Elmo Ho



Edward Chan



Tiffany Chin



Kelvin Chan



Chelsea Chiu

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Here is a glimpse of our team. Besides myself, Sarah is the other co-founder. Our team is rather diverse which is quite different from normal architecture office. We have architects, and also the talents from interior, urban, landscape, graphic, product and social design. Including our community outreach manager, event manager, and urban analyst, the diversified backgrounds help us to approach different projects in a unique way.

Architectural Practice

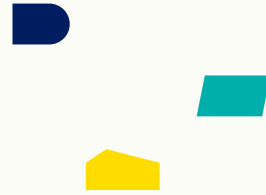


Multi-disciplinary Practice Placemaking Studio

We do not only see ourselves as a multi-disciplinary practice, but also a place-making studio.

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PLACEMAKER



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Gold, Singapore Good Design Award 21'
Best of Public Space, A&D Awards 20'
ULI Asia Pacific Awards for Excellence 19'

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Sometimes we call ourselves the placemaker. On the screen you can see a number of public space projects including the play space project I'm going to share. We love to play with colours and interesting geometries to connect with different users.

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URBAN
CURATOR



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At the same time, we are the urban curator. We curate various events and activities in the city, from workshops to 24-hour continuous public events, from kids to families and from general public to professional.

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SOCIAL INNOVATOR



Create Value - Capture Value - Deliver Value

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We integrate social innovation in our creative process. We have produced social creative product to respond to covid while benefiting the locals, using under-utilised ground floor shop as pop-up space to connect with the local community. Through this collaborative mindset, we create value, capture it and finally deliver to those in needs.



The screen shows the drone view of this play space project. You can see it is surrounded by residential skyscrapers, very typical in Hong Kong. Actually the project is located at the rooftop of a car-parking building, which is part of the public housing estate. Before going deep to the project, I would like to give you a little relevant history about the city.

From Public Housing...

Let's begin by public housing!



All started in 1950s, there was large influx of people in Hong Kong. Because of a sudden big fire at a squatter area, it made more than 50,000 people homeless just one night. Eventually it led to the emergence of public housing managed by the Housing Authority. As shown here, it is called North Point Estate, the first low-cost housing estate but now it has already been demolished and turned into a private development.



Throughout the years, we can see the variation of different housing blocks. Like the picture which is called Choi Hung Estate which was built at the 1960s. All housing blocks are slab type.



At a later stage, the public housing estate developed into a self-contained community, which came with shopping malls, schools, bus terminus and other community facilities. This approach was well adopted under the policy of building satellite towns to cope with the booming population.



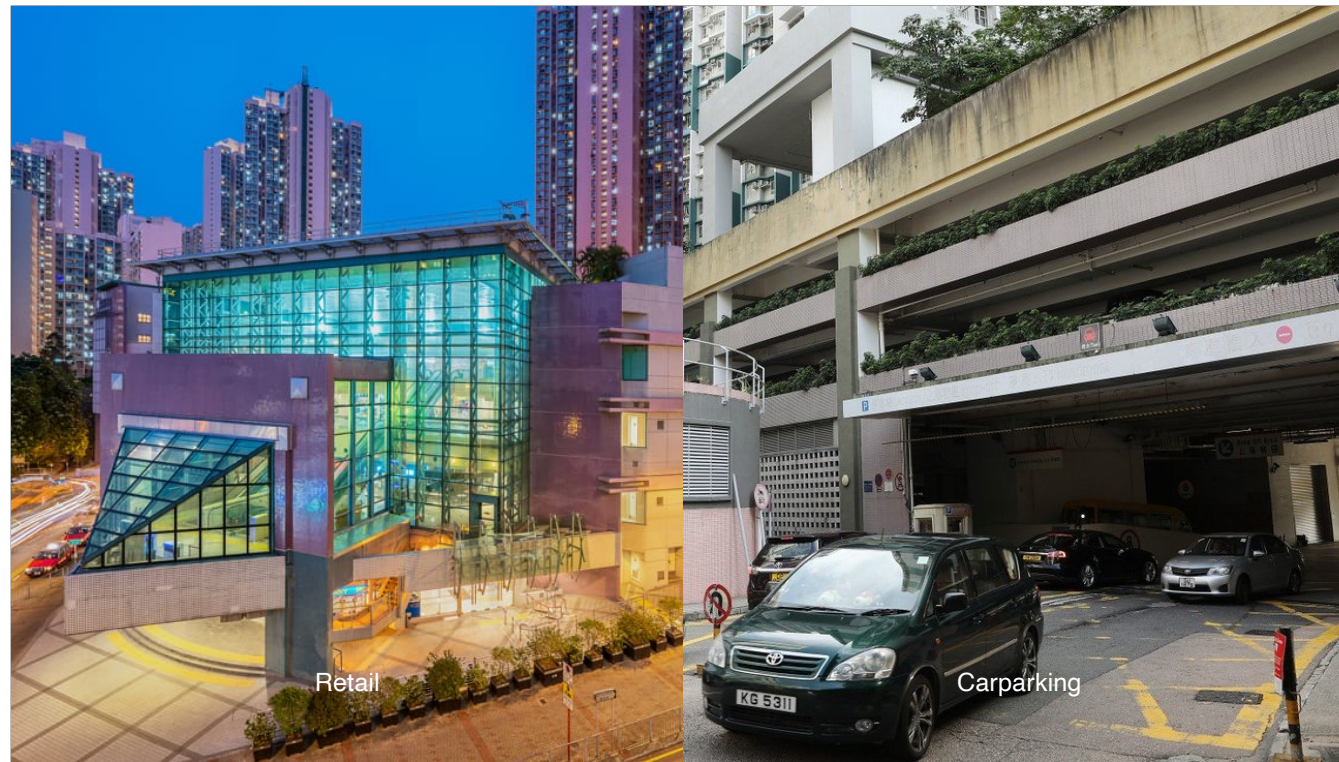
This idea of self-contained community has been continuous till now. But you can see the buildings are much taller and the facilities are getting more comprehensive.

Housing Authority announced Hong Kong's First REIT in 2004

However, there was a radical change when the Housing Authority announced Hong Kong's first REIT in 2004. REIT stands for Real Estate Investment Trust. This divestment plan was the biggest privatisation of its kind in Hong Kong, and the largest single REIT Initial Public Offering in the world.

The Link REIT acquired 180 Properties from Housing Authority.

What we called The Link REIT successfully acquired 180 Properties from the government.



Of those properties, it included the entire retail and car parking facilities, depending on the actual situation of individual estate.



When we look at the rooftops of those properties, we can see they always look the same. With the same colour like traditional red with basketball court lines. But we usually see nobody here.



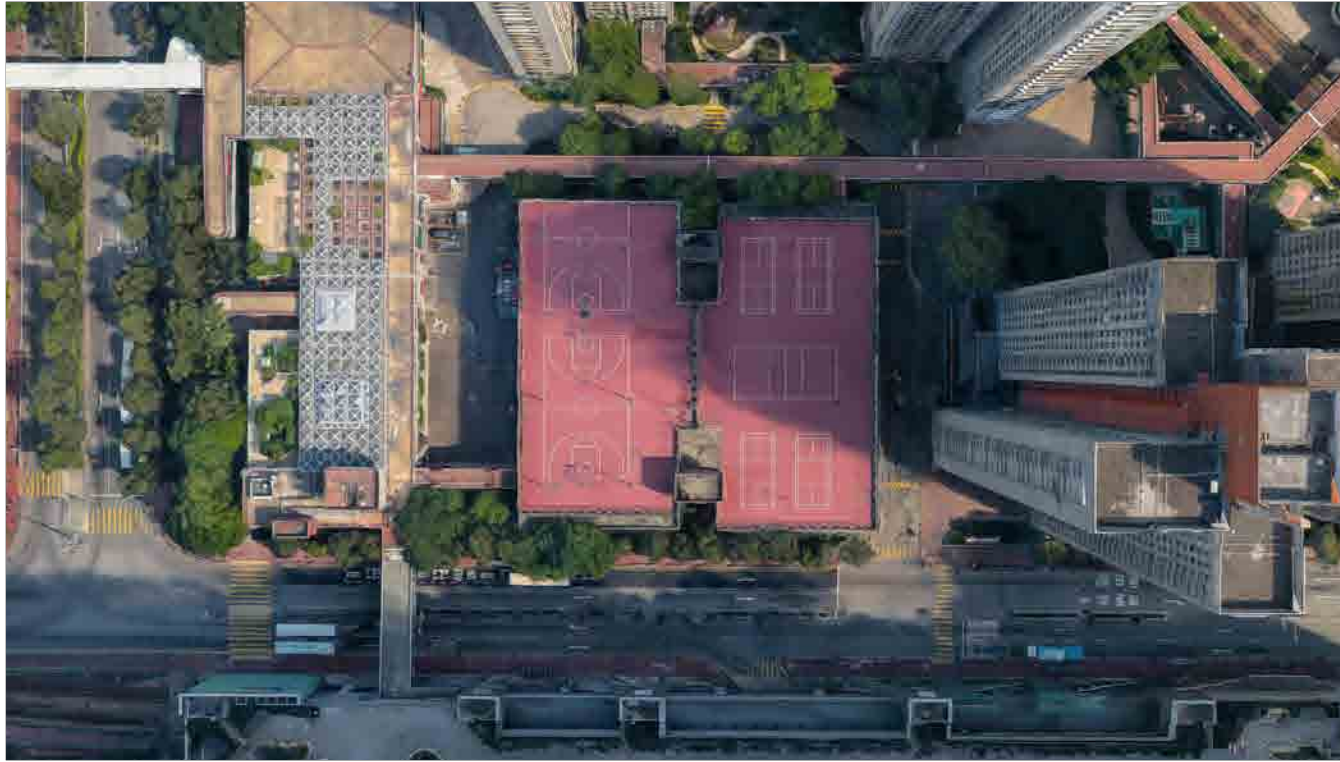
Or some others even with basketball players occasionally going, it is lack of aesthetic design in relation to the site context. It turns out every rooftop is not distinctive.



Sometimes, the court can be obsolete like this photo which I took during a site visit. It is indeed dangerous even just by walking, and of course it is very unpleasant visually too. In general, the rooftops are often overlooked and the owner tend to keep the maintenance as minimum as possible.

To Siu Hei Court Rooftop...

Then when it comes to the project at Siu Hei. Actually our client, Gaw Capital has acquired a number of properties from the Link REIT in 2017 and Siu Hei Court is one of them. This client is willing to invest and revitalise the rooftop space in order to find a way to connect with the community .So that is why this project can appear.



It is actually the same outlook as the other rooftops that I showed you. Red and basketball court lines, and volleyball and badminton court lines can be seen.



There are actually 2 levels which are connected by the stairhoods. The connectivity between these 2 floors are not perfect as you can see there is a fence on the left of this image.



Luckily, the condition was not as bad as that one but you would not see anyone playing or enjoying the space. The space is under-utilized due to its lack of shading and resting space. Once I saw laundry and dried salted fish being hung out.

How did we approach this Project?

So how did we approach this project?



Firstly, we begun by looking at the location, Tuen Mun which is located in the northern part of Hong Kong. Among 18 districts, it is the 6th poorest district and the 5th least happy district in town. In particular, the age group from 50 to 54 years old is regarded as the most stressed one.



From the public house estate called Siu Hei Court, it was built at 1985. It's more than 35 years old from now and we can see close to 40% of residents are within the ages from 45 to 64 years old. So we can see the sign of ageing population around this area.



There is another interesting joke that Hong Kong people play for those district in the north. As traditionally this area is filled with farmland, we often say that those people are riding cows for work. We can see this area does possess certain kind of unique quality.

Geographical Inconvenience
Local Humour

SIU HEI Need of
Happiness

New Image to change perception of
being **sad and behind**

Another funny thing is the name of the estate which is call Siu Hei. Due to the fact that the image of the district being sad and behind, we got inspired by this name Siu Hei, in Chinese character which means smile and laughter.

S **MILE** **HA**
笑下啦，兆禧！笑·隨時
IU **HEI** 嘻·隨心
From Smiles, to Laughs, to a Happy Community

So the theme of happiness was developed which was agreed by the client. From smiles, to laughs and eventually it leads to a happy community.



Next, we were thinking how the court could look from a drone's perspective, as to imagine the overall picture from the eyes of the residents around the space. To start with, we used ultra-large graphics that are only legible from above. Visible from this image is SH, shorthand for Siu Hei. And image this image is upside down which is 85, the year when Siu Hei Court was built.

Now I'm going to show you a few design iterations throughout the design process.



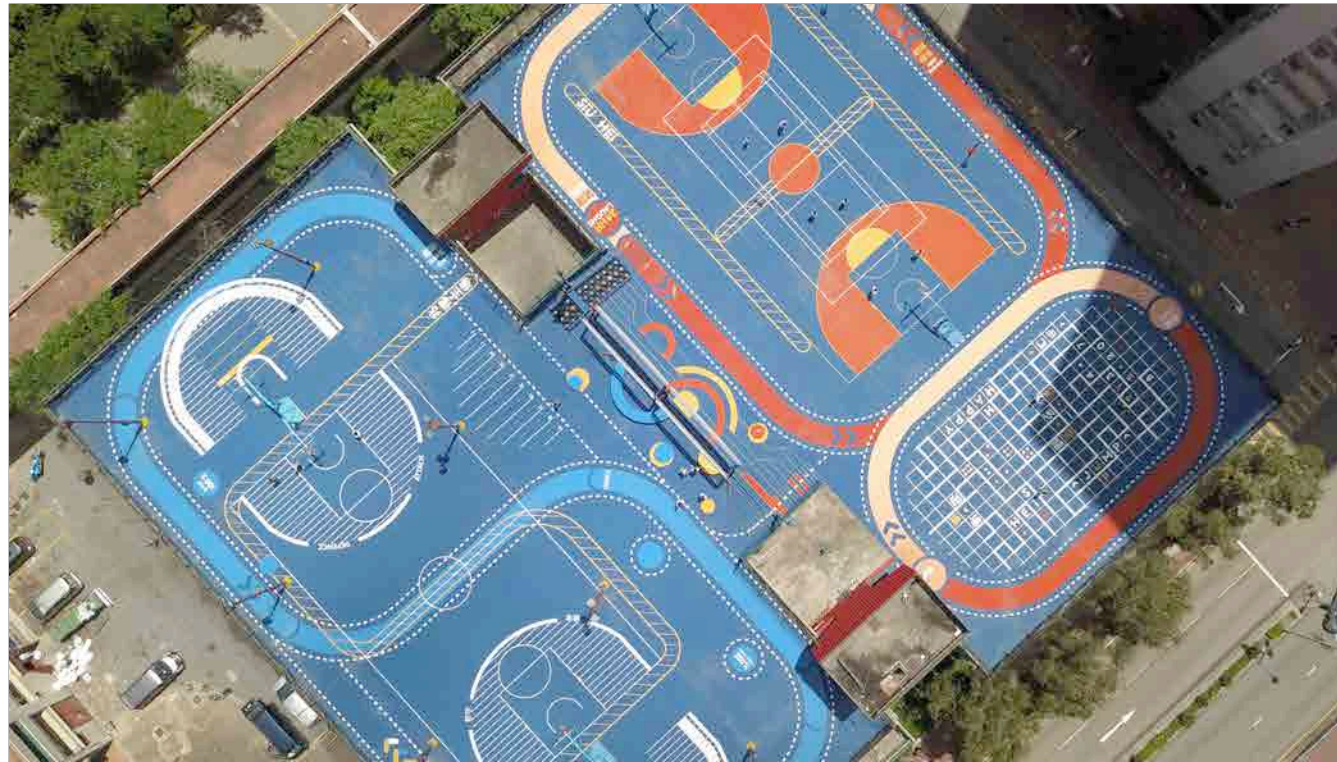
From the very thin lines to these much thicker graphics, we tried to test the visual impact and its readability.



Through continuous discussions with client, we kept fine-tuning the design to ensure the graphics style as well as the functions being suggested in the court reach the consensus.



Finally, it came to the final one as this image. SH and the upside down “85” are still obvious with more distinctive colours for the 2 courts.



The orange lower level is a multi-functional play space, with a 150-meter long running track, as well as a gridded playscape that encourages unstructured and creative play. The blue upper level is catered towards basketball players. It houses 1 full basketball court and 2 half-courts with another 150-meter long running track as well. Basketball court markings are modified to add another dimension to the sport-fun games could be freely invented to hone one's shooting accuracy.



Because of the 2 levels, we designed a spectator seating that crosses 2 levels and introduced a retractable awning to shade users from the sun and rain. It also acts as a physical connector between two sides of the courts, and as a human connector. We hope families, friends and even elderlies now have a gathering place to observe or engage in their own activities while others play.



At this level, more professional look was created to cater the needs from more professional basketball players. But we did provide extra markings for various types of warm-up exercises.



For the lower level, various activities are encouraged in the court while we kept the function of playing volleyball and badminton. And the right image shows a car tire installation. By recalling the old playgrounds in Hong Kong, we created this as special seating and as targets for throwing games.



Another design that we love is this Gridded Playscape for unstructured play. We created simple lines with messages of joy and happiness and people can choose how to interact with this in a creative manner. We believe people are creative and it is not necessary to preset everything for people to follow. Even you are not basketball players, as elderlies, young kids, you can still find ways to enjoy yourself in this zone.



Also, we introduced this spectator seating to provide a shaded resting space and connect the previously separated levels, which proved to be very successful. We have seen lots of people bring lunch boxes over and enjoy their outdoor me-time, especially during this covid period. And this feature wall behind this spectator seating area was actually co-created with the neighbourhood schools.

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Kindergarten
Students

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The first workshop we held was called “Happy Jam”. It was a visualization game where kindergarten students used a banana as the foundation of their drawings. Then they could draw anything that reminds them of “happiness” and “smiles”.

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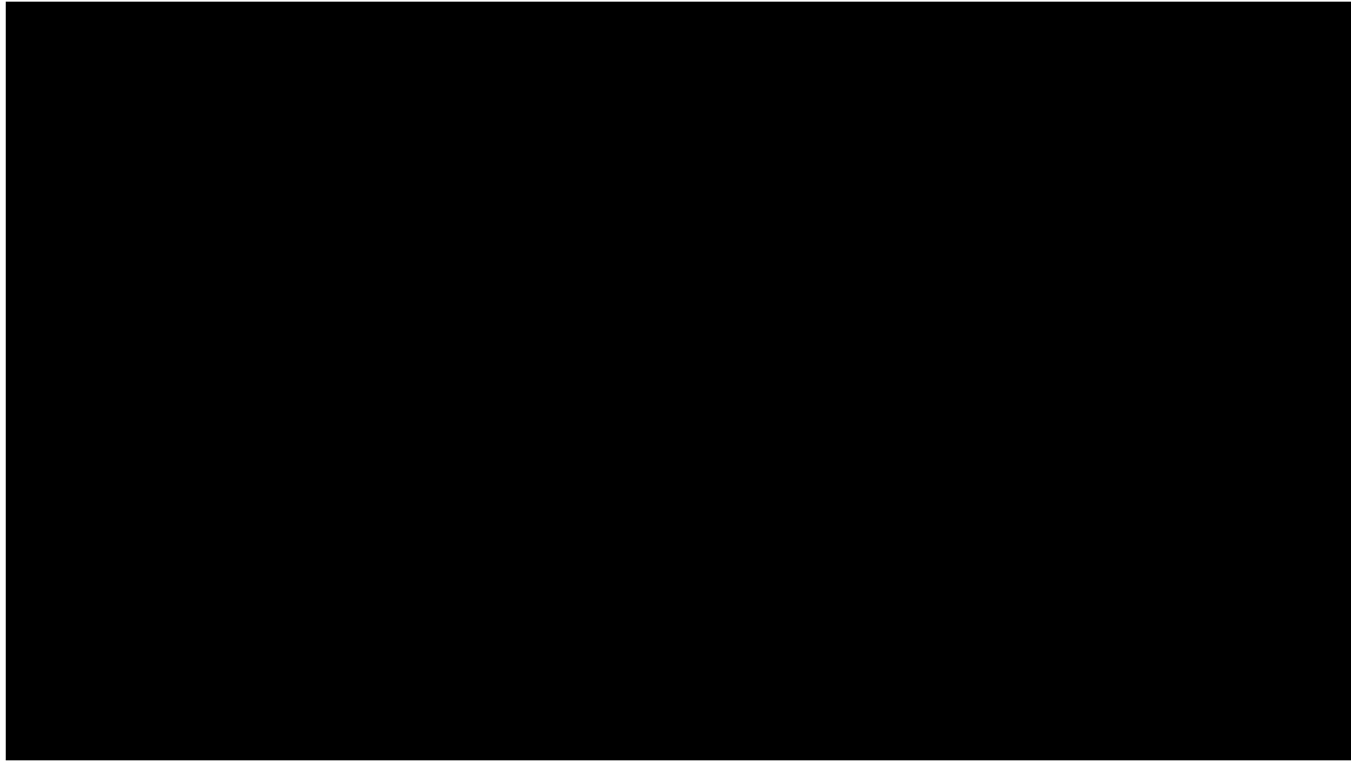
Primary School
Students

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Another workshop was a Zentangle art taught by experienced tutors, where primary school students were guided to complete a meditative drawing session. Through this practice, students will feel so relaxed and focus on expanding their imagination.



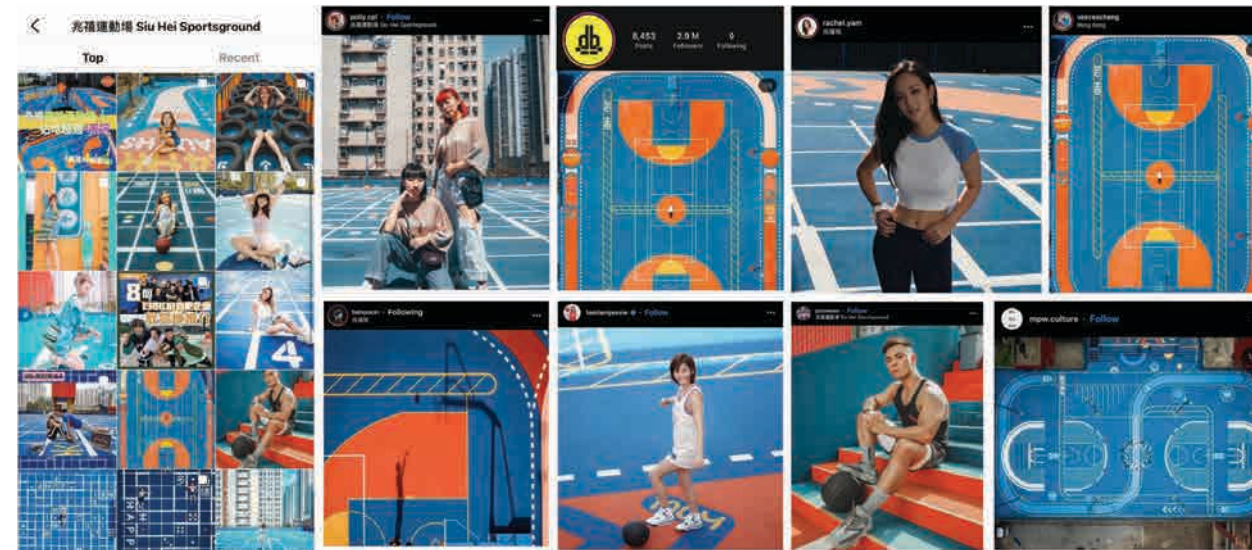
Then it became this permanent feature wall. Through this exercise, we hope that not only the children, but also other users and neighbours of the court, will have a sense of ownership and pride to this unique creation and to this rooftop space.



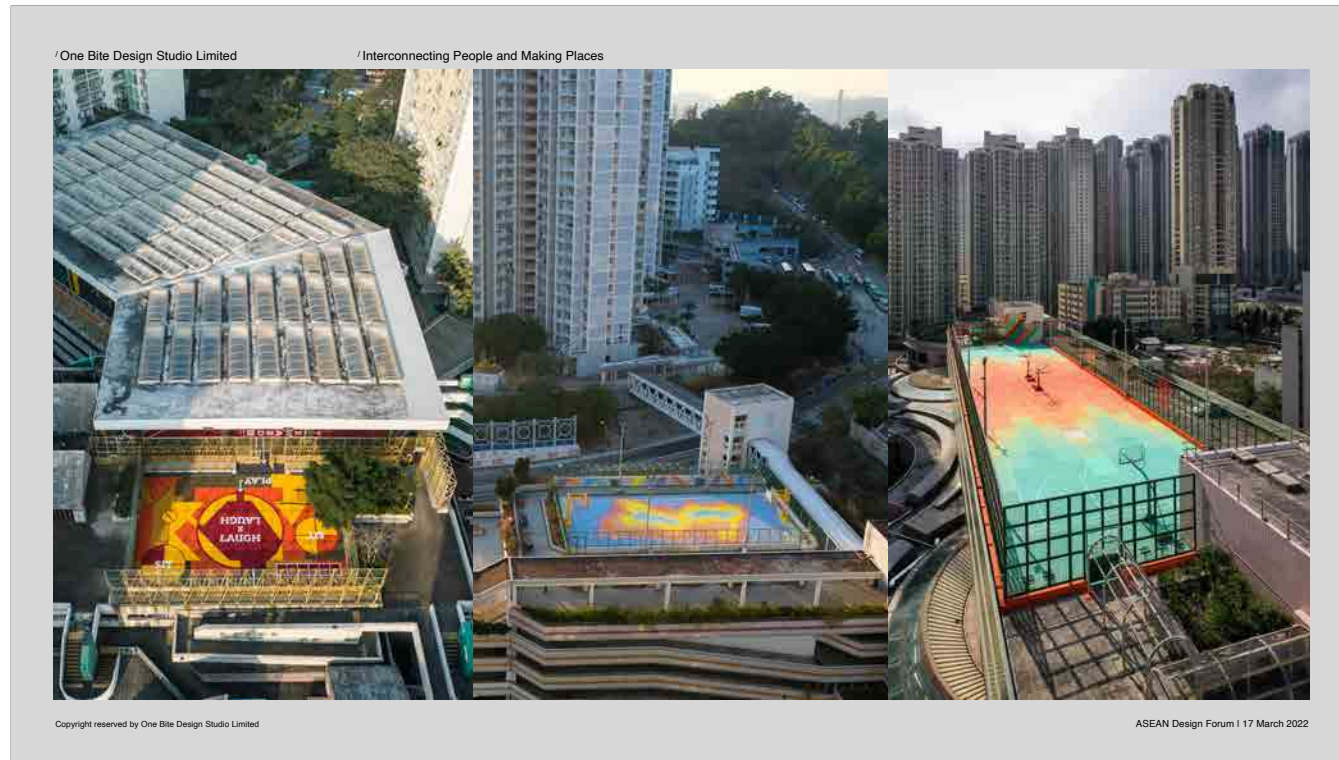
Let's take a look at the video! You can see how users are interacting with the space in real.



After the completion of project, this rooftop play space aroused great attention from different types of media.



And we find lots of teenagers and stylish people coming over to get some nice shots. We even know some of the local tours put this play space as one of the spots for visit. How can you believe a rooftop at public house estate can attract local tourists?



Apart from Siu Hei, we completed a few other rooftop revitalisation projects with the same client. Each project carries unique messages that reflect the local context and the message we want to connect with the community. These projects do create new identities and demonstrate how the untapped potential in rooftop playgrounds can be unlocked to provide more meaningful and fulfilling play experiences for all.

Challenging the Norm Considering the Intergenerational Engaging the Community

To sum up, I would like to share a few take-aways from this project. First is to challenge the norm, as this project demonstrates the successful transformation of the forgotten rooftop space. Second is to consider the intergenerational. As public space is for all, we need to bear in mind for the consideration of different users. Last but not least, to engage the community as the co-creation part we did to bring up community's sense of belongings.



That is the end of my sharing. Thank you!