

M A L L  
C I T Y

HONG KONG'S DREAMWORLDS OF CONSUMPTION

Edited By Stefan Al

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# CONTRIBUTORS

**Stefan Al** is an associate professor of urban design at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of *The Strip: Las Vegas Architecture and America* (2017), and edited a number of books including *Factory Towns of South China: An Illustrated Guidebook* (2012) and *Villages in the City: A Guide to South China's Informal Settlements* (2014). Besides his academic career, Al worked as a practicing architect on projects including the 600-meter-tall Canton Tower in Guangzhou, and served as an advisor to Hong Kong government's Harbourfront Commission and Environment Bureau.

**Carolyn Cartier** is a professor of Human Geography and China Studies at the University of Technology, Sydney. She is the author of *Globalizing South China* (2001) and the co-editor of *The Chinese Diaspora: Space, Place, Mobility and Identity* (2003) and *Seductions of Place: Geographical Perspectives on Globalization and Touristed Landscapes* (2005). Her article in *Urban Geography*, "Production/Consumption and the Chinese City/Region: Cultural Political Economy and the Feminist Diamond Ring" (2009) develops a gendered perspective on urban restructuring and luxury consumerism in Hong Kong and China. She is working on a book on consumerism, urban change, and the Hong Kong–China relationship.

**Cecilia L. Chu** is an assistant professor in the Department of Urban Planning and Design at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). Her research interests include history and theory of architecture and urbanism, cultural landscape studies, heritage conservation, and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of the built environment. Before joining HKU, Chu taught at the Department of Architecture at the University of California in Berkeley, the School of Design at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and the Architectural Conservation Programme at the University of Hong Kong. She has also been involved with several NGOs on policy research relating to urban design and urban conservation. Her writings have been published in several academic journals, including *Urban Studies*, *Habitat International*, *Design Issues*, *Journal of Historical Geography*, *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, and *Geoforum*.

**Tung-Yiu Stan Lai** is an associate professor in the Department of Architecture, Chu Hai College of Higher Education (CHARCH). Lai completed his PhD at the University of Hong Kong. He is a specialist in urban morphology of historic market towns and buildings. His teaching focuses on sustainable design in urban environments, modern architectural theories, and the history of Chinese and Hong Kong architecture. His research interests cover various architectural types ranging from walled villages, *cha chaan teng* (Hong Kong-style cafés), shopping malls, and cinemas to multilevel transportation systems. Lai has frequently been invited by universities, NGOs, museums, and various high-profile institutions around the world to present his research. He has authored a broad range of academic papers on topics such as "From Resistance to Participation: Clanship and Urban Modernization in the Wuyi Rural Market Towns during the Republican Era," "The Architectural and Urban Transformation of Yau Ma Tei Wholesale Fruit Market," "Eisenstein and Moving Street: From Filmic Montage to Architectural Space," "Mapping the Geographical Distribution of Duanfen Markets," and "Social and Religious Space: The Central Axis of Nga Tsin Wai Village."

**Gordon Mathews** is a professor and chair of the Anthropology Department at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is the author of *What Makes Life Worth Living: How Japanese and Americans Make Sense of Their Worlds* (1996), *Global Culture/Individual Identity: Searching for Home in the Cultural Supermarket* (2001), *Hong Kong, China: Learning to Belong to a Nation* (with Eric Ma and Tai-lok Lui, 2008), and *Ghetto at the Center of the World: Chungking Mansions, Hong Kong* (2011). He has also edited a number of books, including *Japan's Changing Generations: Are Young People Creating a New Society?* (with Bruce White, 2004), *Pursuits of Happiness: Well-Being in Anthropological Perspective*

(with Carolina Izquierdo, 2009), and *Globalization from Below: The World's Other Economy* (with Gustavo Lins Ribeiro and Carlos Alba Vega, 2012). He has been teaching a class of asylum seekers every week in Chungking Mansions.

**Adam Nowek** is an urban researcher and architectural photographer. His primary areas of research are Vancouverism, pop-up city-making, and high-rise residential architecture. In 2014, Adam edited *Pop-Up City: City-Making in a Fluid World* by BIS Publishers. His photography focuses on comparative studies of architectural typologies and documenting urban spaces in transition.

**David Grahame Shane** studied architecture at the Architectural Association, London, and graduated in 1969. He continued to study for MArch in Urban Design (1971) and then PhD in Architectural and Urban History (1978) with Colin Rowe at Cornell University. He taught Graduate Urban Design at Columbia University and Town Planning at Cooper Union from 1992 to 2012. He is a visiting professor at the Polytechnic in Milan, and has participated in the Urban Design PhD program at the University of Venice since 2000. This fall he taught the Landscape Urbanism PhD program at Copenhagen University in Aarhus, Denmark. He has lectured widely and published in architectural journals in Europe, the United States, and Asia. He co-edited with Brian McGrath *Sensing the 21st Century City: Close-Up and Remote* (November 2005). He is the author of *Recombinant Urbanism: Conceptual Modeling in Architecture, Urban Design and City Theory* (2005) and *Urban Design Since 1945: A Global Perspective* (2011). His most recent publication is *Block, Superblock and Megablock: A Short History* (2014).

**Barrie Shelton** is an honorary associate professor at the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning, the University of Sydney, where he earlier directed urban design programs. His expertise is in urban morphology, history, theory, and design, following an education that spanned from planning, geography to architecture. He has a special interest in East Asian culture and built form, which is reflected in his recent books: *Learning from the Japanese City: Looking East in Urban Design* (2012), the expanded Japanese version, *Nihon no toshi kara manabu koto* (2014), and the co-authored *The Making of Hong Kong: From Vertical to Volumetric* (2011). Shelton has been a Japan Foundation Fellow, a visiting professor at English and Japanese universities, and an associate professor specializing in urban design at the Universities of Melbourne and Tasmania. For more information, see <http://urbantransmedia.blogspot.com.au/>.

**Jonathan D. Solomon** is director of the Department of Architecture, Interior Architecture and Designed Objects at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and editor of the art and design journal *Forty-Five*. His recent book, *Cities without Ground*, was reviewed by publications including *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Guardian*, and *Der Spiegel*. Solomon had edited the influential series *306090 Books* for over a decade and served as curator of the US Pavilion at the 2010 Venice Architecture Biennale. Solomon holds a BA from Columbia University and a MArch from Princeton University, and is a licensed architect in the State of Illinois.

# INTRODUCTION

## MALL CITY: HONG KONG'S DREAMWORLDS OF CONSUMPTION

Stefan Al

Hong Kong is a city of malls. With about one mall per square mile it is the world's mall-densest place,<sup>1</sup> only trailed by Singapore, the other consumer-oriented city-state.<sup>2</sup> This immense mall concentration is proof that retail lies at the core of Hong Kong's urban economy, with most people employed in the retail and wholesale sector—about one in four people, compared to New York where the sector employs one in nine.<sup>3</sup> Shopping alone is seen as a valid reason for a visit to the city that for decades has enjoyed the reputation as “Asia's Shopping Paradise.” A place where all brands can be found and fakes can be avoided, Hong Kong has become *the* retail destination for China, the fastest growing consumer market on earth. Global brands now see Hong Kong worthy of a flagship, where they are free of sales and import taxes, but have to cough up the world's highest-priced retail space: in 2013, its high-end shopping malls rented for an average yearly \$4,328 per square foot, twice as high as New York's Fifth Avenue, four times more than Paris's or London's upscale retail districts.<sup>4</sup>

Hong Kong is also a city of skyscrapers. The city ranks the world's number one with 1,309 skyscrapers, almost twice as many as New York City, its closest competitor.<sup>5</sup> Hong Kong's skyscrapers are a representation of the world's highest real estate prices, artificially kept up by the government's monopoly on land from which it derives a large portion of its revenue, and pumped up by foreign real estate investors: take a short stroll in central Hong Kong and touts will flog you with flyers featuring for-sale apartments. Skyscrapers are the *raison d'être* behind

the city's top two ranking tourist attractions: the Peak, a mountain on Hong Kong Island that gives a panorama view over hundreds of concrete high-rise towers, and the Symphony of Lights, the world's largest permanent lightshow that so deliriously animates the city's most iconic skyscrapers with pulsating lasers, under a soundtrack.

This concrete jungle of malls and skyscrapers has become the breeding ground of a lucrative cross-fertilization. Malls are rarely found in isolation. In the residential areas of the New Territories, they tend to attach to residential towers and transit hubs; in Hong Kong Island and Kowloon, they are known to reside under office and hotel towers.

It is a fruitful symbiosis. The broad mall, designed to seduce and bring people in, prefers to sit on the ground where it maximizes its shop-window façade like a Venus flytrap. Its tentacles reach deep into the ground to attach to subway systems, or bind to other malls with an ivy-like mesh of sky-bridges. The tall skyscraper, designed to move people up, accommodates thousands efficiently but requires some distance: set backs between other skyscrapers to allow for air and light. Together, the mall provides the skyscrapers with extended entry points, an elevated base, and a private roof deck, while the skyscrapers offer the mall an icon visible from far away and a large economy of residents to feed the mall, and establish a self-sufficient ecosystem. For these and other reasons, the Big Box and the High Rise tend to mate.

The government has named the more recent permutations with a vague and deceiving term: a "Comprehensive Development Area" (CDA). It stands for a planning control mechanism that streamlined large mixed-use Transit Oriented Developments (TOD), and helped the mall become



more dominant. But this book coins this urban typology—defined by a cluster of residential or office towers standing on a podium shopping mall, often integrated with railway infrastructure—with a more honest designator: a Mall-Oriented Complex (MOC), or “mall city.”

This new term recognizes the centrality of the mall and the vastness of the complex. These mall-oriented developments are cities in and of themselves; they accommodate captive audiences of up to tens of thousands of people who live, work, and play within a single structure, without ever having to leave. The mall is deliberately placed on the intersection of all pedestrian flows, between all entry points into the structure and the residential, office, and transit functions—impossible to miss.

The mall city has become one of the basic units of urban development in Hong Kong, like what the skyscraper has become of New York City. As these insular developments multiplied, they connected to one another and formed clusters, turning Hong Kong into an archipelago of mall cities—with important implications for people’s lives.

The consequence of this urban form is that, for millions of people, entering a mall has become an inevitability, not a choice. It has set in stone a culture of consumerism in which everyday life is increasingly played out on the terrain of the mall, and the private shopping atrium takes on the role of the public square. And besides, Hong Kong’s apartments are small, its summer climate hot and humid, so why not meet at the mall where space is plenty and air-conditioning is free? And while being there, although one might not need to shop for anything specific, one might as well have a look around, and spend some money.<sup>6</sup>

In this respect, Hong Kong's mall cities achieve the maximum potential of the "Gruen Transfer." This term refers to the moment when the mall's undulating corridors deviate consumers from their original intentions, leading them to shop for shopping's sake, rather than looking for a product specifically. It was named in "honor" of architect Victor Gruen, who designed the first mall, the 1956 Southdale Center in Minnesota—fully enclosed and climate controlled, complete with anchor stores, escalators, and interior atrium. Ironically, the Austrian immigrant, who had changed his name from Grünbaum to Gruen (German for "green"), had more idealistic purposes. He envisioned the mall as a new town center—supplemented with apartments, offices, a park, and schools—as a dense antidote to the rather solitary American suburbs. His invention backfired when malls in America remained insular, and nourished the frantic consumerism he was trying to reduce, like a Frankenstein's monster.

"Those bastard developments," Gruen exclaimed as he revisited his American creations. They had ditched community functions and surrounded themselves not with other buildings, but with "the ugliness and discomfort of the land-wasting seas of parking."

But unlike their American counterparts, Hong Kong's malls lie closer to Gruen's original intentions. They are part of a high-density, mixed-use community. Even better than Gruen's imagination, they are integrated in mass transit and have stunning tall vertical atria—all the while being highly profitable.

Moreover, in Hong Kong Gruen's creation would reach an entirely new order of magnitude. The 1966 Ocean Terminal, the first in what was called the "mallings" of Hong Kong, planted the seed.<sup>8</sup> Preceding mass consumerism, it was built for tourists. Even if the locals did not shop at Ocean Terminal, it acculturated them in window-shopping and brand value. After China's Open Door Policy in 1978 Hongkongers quickly became consumers, their economy upgraded from manufacturing to providing commercial and financial services to Mainland China.

Malls now catered to the growing middle class and were integrated into new town developments, transit stations, and office complexes. They quickly became the most visited malls in the world.

By the twenty-first century, with wealth skewing to a narrower segment of the population, new malls abandoned the masses for luxury markets. They grew from a couple of floors to 26-story structures, their height an indicator of escalating retail rents. Moreover, mainland shoppers now flood the city, many of them with same-day return tickets and empty suitcases—in 2012, 35 million Chinese nationals visited Hong Kong, 20 million of which returned the same day. With China expected to overtake the United States as the world's largest consumer economy in 2016, the fate of Gruen's invention will take another turn. Developers in the Mainland and other places now closely copy Hong Kong's mall cities, aiming to achieve compact, transit-oriented, and lucrative developments.

*Mall City* is an investigation of this interesting and influential urban typology. The third in a book series about contemporary urban forms in China, including *Factory Towns of South China* and *Villages in the City*, it explores the city from a multidisciplinary and visual angle. Essays from experts provide insight from different disciplines, including architecture, urban planning, geography, cultural studies, and anthropology. They offer explanations of how the mall city came into being, what it means for Hong Kong communities, and what we can learn from this development.

This book is also a catalog of Hong Kong's mall cities, including a structured list of key developments. In contrast to the other two books, in which the case studies were sampled to explore the various forms across different regions—laid out as guidebooks—the cases here are sampled in such a way as to show how the type has evolved over time. This historical typological classification of mall development in Hong Kong not only provides structure for the book, it also shows how shopping has become imbricated into the city's politics and people's everyday lives.

The catalog begins with an early version: a single large residential block, Chungking Mansions, which was converted into a mixed-use shopping center with guesthouses and offices. The second category is the residential estate with a podium, which revamped Corbusier's "towers in the park" into "towers on the mall." The third includes office towers on a podium mall, whereas type four, "T4," is the most potent of them all: it includes residential, hotels, and office towers into an ever more encompassing complex, all the while the mall continues to be at the nexus of the development. The evolution of this type shows a clear logic: the mall city quickly grew in size and complexity, with an ever clearer laser-sharp focus: getting people to shop.

The layout of the book attempts to simulate the very urban experience of this high-density and interconnected city it describes. Drawings, pictures, and portraits help readers experience the bewildering, intertwining, and congested city. Readers will encounter various shoppers and shop-owners, like mainland Chinese close to the border, wheeling home suitcases filled with toiletries and diapers. Or South Asian and African traders at Chungking Mansions, buying cheap cellphones and exchanging money. Or Filipino domestic workers at World Wide House, remitting currency. These encounters reveal that mall cities are not just homogenous. Within the microcosm of each mall city appear different socio-economic groups, and products that remind people of Hong Kong's past reputation of good value, beyond its current status as an Elysium of luxury handbags.

To help evaluate each mall city variation, urban design graduate students from the University of Hong Kong made a series of drawings. The exploded view is key. It shows the dynamic interrelations between floors and circulation systems. To facilitate easy reading, different uses are marked with different colors: blue stands for office, yellow for residential, but you will find that red is the dominant color—the code for shopping—always at the intersection of functions, impossible to avoid in the maze of mall cities.

Shopping is seamless in Hong Kong. Metro exits lead directly into malls and footbridges connect different malls so that pedestrians remain in a shopping continuum, not contaminated by the public realm. The drawings also visualize the interior mechanism of the complex, and the important decisions developers need to make about program composition, distribution, and circulation. How much retail makes a development successful, and what should be the programmatic mix? How should the program be distributed through the complex, and where is the best location to place the “anchor” tenants? And most importantly: how can circulation systems be placed in such a way as to “irrigate” the mall with a solid stream of shoppers, nourishing retail rents from top to bottom?

In this logistical equation, exterior architecture is a mere after-effect. Overall architectural form is chiefly a result of maximizing Gross Floor Area (GFA), at times simply by the literal extrusion of a plot. Ground-level façade design is often an exercise of fortification, the deliberate dismissal of urban context to introvert the mall, by maximizing the “blank wall ratio”: the percentage of bare, windowless walls decorating the ground floors. Residential towers typically have floorplans the shape of a diamond or crucifix to cram in as many apartments as possible. To further increase square footage developers squeeze bay windows (excluded from the maximum gross area set by the government) onto the buildings’ outer face, like putting pimples on a tower.

In opposition to the plain exterior and the small apartments stand spacious and beautiful atria, the site of activities, special exhibitions, and community gatherings, where many feel at “home.” These interior spaces, as the cutaway drawings reveal, generate a unique type of urbanisms, where shopping is juxtaposed with ice rinks, and corridors and escalators transport people into a three dimensional spatial universe. These lavish spaces stand in sharp contrast to, and are at times at odds with, the sidewalks of the public realm.

The drawings also reveal the location of the Privately Owned Public space (POPs), the few open spaces within the complex that are a consequence of the government allowing developers to build more floor space, if they provide open space to the public. In this ambiguity between private management and public interests the POPs can be found on places including rooftops, so that they are only accessible through the maze of the mall. Meanwhile, at the POPs in front of the

mall, the extensive use by the public is discouraged. For instance, Hong Kong's Times Square has deliberately provided uncomfortable chairs for sitting, along with "over-zealous" guards preventing people from lingering too long.<sup>9</sup> Times Square is "open to use by public" but "subject to rules on display," including the outlawing of demonstrations, dogs, birds, and musical instruments. In short, the trick is to place the POP to get people to shop.

The essays in the book provide a deeper analysis of the mall city. For instance, why did the mall city emerge in Hong Kong? In the first essay, Barrie Shelton explains how Hong Kong is "predisposed towards mall cities," thanks to regional historic building typologies such as the Hakka Village and the Guangdong shophouse, as well as local patterns of living, including the custom of occupying roofs and the habit of multilevel complexity stemming from contorting buildings to Hong Kong's hillsides.

In the second essay, David Grahame Shane provides an international background to Hong Kong's mall complex. He traces the evolution of Hong Kong's retail malls from nineteenth-century European department stores to 1970s Tokyo malls situated above railway junctions. In Hong Kong, retail manifested itself in isolated towers and department stores first, then as malls within new towns, and finally to central Hong Kong's three-dimensional meshwork of shopping corridors, footway bridges, and subway connections. These recent developments are true megastructures, cities in and of themselves, realizations of what 1960s avant-garde architecture groups could only dream of, and a high-density and transit-oriented urban form that is perhaps a model for future cities.

Zooming into Hong Kong's vertical malls, Tung-Yiu Stan Lai shows in the third essay how they are increasingly rising upward, stacking up floors of shopping as high as the Big Ben. But how do architects deal with the challenge to bring shoppers to upper floors? Lai shows how particularly designer Jon Jerde has succeeded in ensuring high retail rent values throughout, thanks to a variety of innovations including very large glass atria, a "spiral," and "expresscalators."

Nevertheless, as exciting as these developments may be architecturally, they radically restructure the existing physical and social fabric of the city. In the fourth essay, Carolyn Cartier shows how they become part of a process of gentrification that drives up rents and introduces high-end brands in industrial or working-class areas, while destroying historical landscapes. Developers and government have converted waterfronts, industrial areas, heritage areas, and working-class neighborhoods into retail space. And as Hong Kong developers export their models to other places including Shanghai and Beijing, mall city-style consumerism quickly spreads.

Chungking Mansions is an odd exception to this gentrification. In the fifth essay, Gordon Mathews writes about how this development became a low-cost heaven of cheap guestrooms, meals, phones, and computers. At the same time, with its unique South Asian and sub-Saharan African clientele, he argues it is "probably the most globalized building in the world." Mathews finds clues to the building's peculiarity in its unique history, including its large South Asian population and lack of a unified ownership structure.

In the sixth essay, Cecilia L. Chu challenges the conceptualization of malls as solely a commercialized space eroding the traditional spheres of community. Focusing on New Town Plaza, Chu shows how community development is key to the mega malls of the early 1980s, as developers provided locals with billiards, bowling arenas, ice skating rinks, and fountains. To many residents of new towns, the mall became more than just a capitalist space for making profits, but a place they attached



sentiment and meaning to, on their own terms. Ironically, as the mega malls that used to be places of mass consumption strive to be more exclusive today, they formed the basis for resistance to development, since local community groups protest against further changes.

Jonathan D. Solomon, in the seventh essay, questions the notion that Hong Kong's malls are anti-urban by default, like many Western examples. Not all developments fulfill the stereotype of the "glo-cal bypass," like Union Square, which links directly to the airport but has little local connections. The International Finance Centre (IFC), on the other hand, is an example of a "global village," more integrated globally and locally, the crossroads between the airport, railway, ferry, and local neighborhood—partly because of a unique set of footbridges. In his intricate drawings of the networks, IFC stands at the intersection of a new type of public urban space network of shopping centers and footbridges that have the potential to create new class encounters, like Baudelaire once observed on Parisian boulevards.

In short, the mall has the dual potential to either erode urban public life or to contribute to it. At times it fragments the city with monotonous development, at other times it hyper-connects the urban fabric and enthralls it with diversity.

At worst, Hong Kong's mall cities represent a dystopian future of a city after the "Shopocalypse."<sup>10</sup> They are the built structures of a state-of-the-art post-Fordist society in which people prefer to be in the mall as often as possible, not only to quench their shopping thirst but also to breathe in fresh air. According to a research conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency in 2010, the indoor levels of particulate matters of Hong Kong's malls were 70 percent lower than outdoor, thanks to their large ventilation systems. Malls offer consumers an oasis away from the smog, a place where they are not confronted with the undesired side effects of their consumerism: the nitrate-saturated air from neighboring South China factories.

The fundamental structure of a hypermodern society appears to be a medieval form of urbanism in which private enclaves stand as fortresses in the landscape, fragmenting the city in a series of high-rise gated communities, only accessible from shop-flanked gateways. Streets outside the enclave suffer, faced by the blank walls of introverted buildings, at best masked by architectural make-up. Devoid of life, streets are demoted to a place where people come to stand in line to get into the luxury shops—Canton Road has permanent queues into Louis Vuitton—as an affirmation of true brand veneration.<sup>11</sup>

At best, Hong Kong's mall cities are vibrant, diverse, and interconnected developments contributing to the public realm. Solid podium malls are broken into pieces that integrate with the city fabric, intersected by open streets and courtyards that increase and improve public open space in the city. They enable natural air ventilation, let in landscape and vegetation to naturally cool down the buildings and lessen heat island effects. The podium roofs are interconnected with footbridges so that residents enjoy the elevated level continuously. Podium edges are not blank walls but shop fronts that activate the street, or the podium lies underground as a base for open space. Finally, breaking the mall can occur on the level of a shop, by providing opportunities not just for formulaic flagships of global retailers, but for everyday shop owners that add to a diversity of products, for instance, in Argyle Centre's small stores, or in the tiny "cube boxes" in Sino Centre that anyone can rent for a little over a hundred dollars a month, with "no commission."

The time is right for Hong Kong's mall cities to reinvent themselves. Mainland shoppers might lose their appetite for Hong Kong's malls soon since they can find similar products and experiences at home: in 2012, three Chinese cities constructed the largest amount of new retail space in the world, and the city of Tianjin had more retail space under construction than the existing shopping space of any European city

(except for Paris and Moscow).<sup>12</sup> Macao, by 2018, will have shopping space more than 15 times compared to a decade ago.<sup>13</sup> Will this fast-developing retail sector in Mainland China and in Macao's casinos make Hong Kong's shopping malls unnecessary?

Meanwhile, in the United States, the birthplace of the mall, there are many sightings of "dead malls." There, observers herald the end of the mall,<sup>14</sup> victims of high vacancy rates, "ghostboxes" (empty anchor stores), and "label scars" (still existing signage of a previous tenant). Retail increasingly leaves the mall to return to cities, streets, and markets. Yet, Hong Kong still builds more malls, while it eliminates its markets and streets.

During the Umbrella Movement, Hong Kong's 2014 protest for universal suffrage, students occupied neither the quasi-public spaces on top of malls, nor the interior atriums, but the little of what is left of Hong Kong's public space on the ground. They placed their tents smack in front of the malls, on top of highways. Their recuperation of public urban space expressed the street's democratic importance. Good urban space, and its capacity for inclusiveness, difference, spontaneity, as well as for contestation, is vital to any city—like the Ancient Greek "agoras" were places to buy goods *and* discuss politics, and became the birthplace of democracy.

In addition, public space appears attractive to retail as well, as shown by the shopping trends that offer alternatives to enclosed malls. Beijing's new Taikoo Li Sanlitun is a thriving retail district with shop-lined streets. Hong Kong's popular Star Street features local artisan shops mixed with restaurants. While these streetscape environments are arguably equally retail-centric as malls, they nevertheless benefit from the identity, diversity, and spontaneity of the streets.

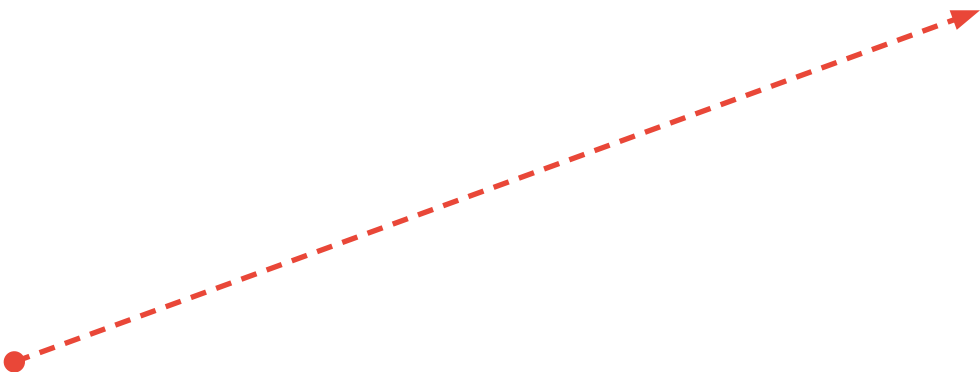
Since the Hong Kong government owns most of the land, in contrast to most other places, it can actually exert its influence and break up the mall with the possibility of creating new exciting types of urbanism. This does not mean it needs to abandon the mall city altogether, but to swing the balance more in favor of the public realm. It needs to supplement the mall with a dose of public open space, just like it has used escalators, an export from the mall, to inject flavor into the city—for instance, the Central–Mid–Levels escalator, the world’s largest outdoor covered escalator, which led to the vibrant “Soho” district, and now plays a major role in Hong Kong’s cultural identity.

Whatever the future holds, this book features contemporary Hong Kong as a unique rendering of an advanced consumer society. Retail space has come a long way since the nineteenth-century Parisian arcades—according to Walter Benjamin, the birthplace of capitalist spectacle, where for the first time luxury goods had been put on secular display. It has morphed from the Ur-form of the arcades to the department stores,<sup>15</sup> and from the mall into the mall city: fully intertwined into people’s everyday lives. Hong Kong’s mall cities represent a new moment in the phantasmagoria of commodities, in which shopping is ubiquitous and mall atria are ever more mesmerizing, aiming to perpetuate a constant consciousness of shopping. If Paris was the paradigmatic consumer city of the nineteenth century, then Hong Kong is the consumer capital of the twenty-first century: a high-density “dreamworld” of mall cities.

## NOTES

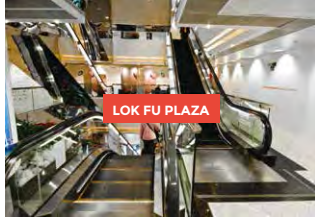
- 1 Data of leasable retail area per country taken from the International Council of Shopping Centers.
- 2 “City-state” is a politically contentious term in Hong Kong, which has become a Special Administrative Region within the People’s Republic of China since 1997.
- 3 PwC, *PwC’s Cities of Opportunity: Through a Retail and Consumer Lens* (December 2012), 13.
- 4 CBRE Research, *Hong Kong Prime Retail: Marketview*, Q1, 2013.
- 5 Emporis, “Most Skyscrapers,” at <http://www.emporis.com/statistics/most-kyscrapers> (accessed June 14, 2013). Emporis defines a skyscraper as a multistory building at least 100 meters tall.
- 6 Researchers found that spending is directly related to the amount of time people spend at shopping centers. See Jon Goss, “The ‘Magic of the Mall’: An Analysis of Form, Function, and Meaning in the Contemporary Retail Built Environment,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 83.1 (1993), 18–47.
- 7 Jeffrey Hardwick, *Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 216.
- 8 Tai-lok Lui, “The malling of Hong Kong,” in Gordon Mathews and Tai-lok Lui (eds.), *Consuming Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001), 25.
- 9 Diana Lee, “Pushy Times Square Guards Raise Hackles,” *The Standard*, March 5, 2008.
- 10 The term “Shopapocalypse” was coined by Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping, a secular anti-consumerist performance group.
- 11 Katie Hunt, “Chinese Luxury Labels to Challenge Western Counterparts,” *BBC News*, December 14, 2011.
- 12 CBRE Global Viewpoint, “Shopping Centre Development: The Most Active Global Cities,” June 2012.
- 13 Muhammad Cohen, “Amid Casino Woes, Macau Retail Shines, At Least For Las Vegas Sands,” *Forbes*, August 12, 2014.
- 14 For instance, Tony Dokoupil, “Is the Mall Dead?” *Newsweek*, November 11, 2008; Ellen Dunham-Jones and June Williamson, *Retrofitting Suburbia: Urban Design Solutions for Redesigning Suburbs* (New York: Wiley, 2008).
- 15 The development of retail in Hong Kong and other Asian cities has also been influenced by the advent of the department store in the early twentieth century. See Kerrie MacPherson (ed.), *Asian Department Stores* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998).

In a hyper-dense city such as Hong Kong, developers prefer to maximize the amount of floor space that can be developed on any given site. Hong Kong's resulting mall design typology is vertically stacked retail, with some malls containing the same amount of floors as a mid-rise building. Of the malls featured here, only Chungking Mansions relies on elevators as the primary method of vertical transport, resulting in lengthy queues to use the building's few elevators. The vast majority of Hong Kong's malls have an intricate network of escalators aimed at maximizing the number of visitors to pass by the maximum amount of storefronts. Many of these malls place upward and downward escalators parallel to one another (e.g., Golden Shopping Centre, Tuen Mun Town Plaza), while others invert the escalators, allowing minimal effort for swift passage between multiple floors (e.g., Lok Fu Plaza, Sino Centre). More adventurous vertical transport involves escalators spanning multiple floors, accenting the grandeur of the structure itself: the escalators of Times Square span multiple floors, ascending the atrium in a crisscross shape, while the primary escalator of Langham Place is impressively tall and time-consuming, allowing passengers to take in their surroundings at a leisurely pace. While attractive and interesting visual elements in their own right, these unique escalator configurations additionally serve the purpose of spreading people around as efficiently and as evenly as possible.



# VERTICAL TRANSPORT

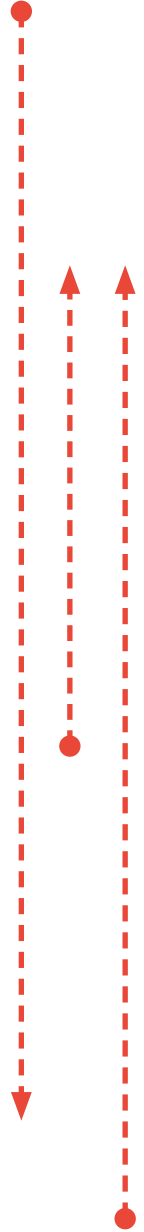








# VERTICAL TRANSPORT



TYPE  
**2**  
Mall /  
Residential

## A Mall for Public Housing Residents

# LOK FU PLAZA

**L**ok Fu Plaza, called Lok Fu Centre when it first opened in 1985, was constructed and managed by the Hong Kong Housing Authority. Before the development of Lok Fu Centre, no commercial facilities had been planned for the resettlement estates of Lok Fu. Shops and workshops were only provided later in ground floor bays because of concern over the lack of employment opportunities for tenants. Until then, on-street hawking was common in many Kowloon central estates.

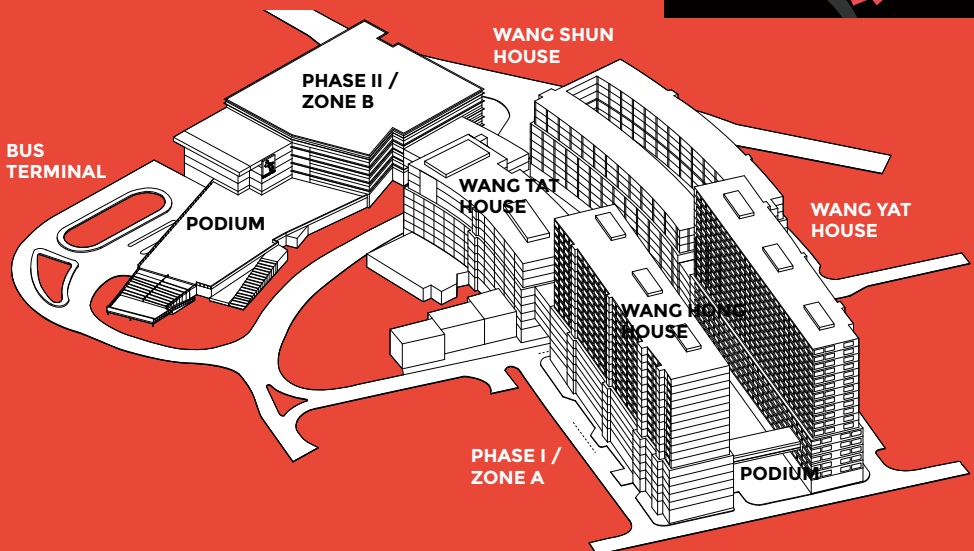
In 1975, a Town Planning Office study recommended the establishment of a district

shopping center in Wang Tau Hom / Lok Fu together with the construction of a MTR station. The Housing Authority chose to build Lok Fu Centre on top of the MTR Lok Fu Station.

After only two years, the Housing Authority decided to expand Lok Fu Centre's mall with a wider variety of shops, no longer perceiving Lok Fu's public housing residents as poor working-class households, but rather as shoppers with purchasing power.

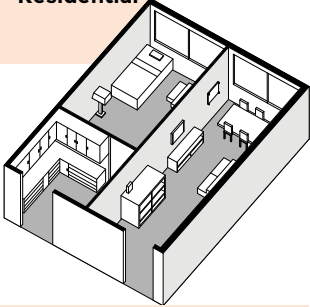
The Housing Authority eventually sold Lok Fu Centre to the private Link Real Estate Investment Trust, Hong Kong's

first real estate investment trust, and today Asia's largest. As a consequence, the estate changed from public to private ownership. In 2007, Link started a renovation program that would cover every corner of Lok Fu Plaza with shops.



## R

## Residential

**Wang Yat House Apartment**

Flats per floor: 20-26

Flat size: 35-80 m<sup>2</sup>

Flat cost: 1.75-8.0 million HKD

Cost per m<sup>2</sup>: 50,000-100,000 HKD**Address**

198 Junction Road, Wang Tau Hom, Kowloon

**Developer**The Hong Kong Housing Authority (Before)  
The Link Property Limited (Now)**Architect**

Rocco Design

**Construction**

Initiation: 1989

Renovation Completion: 2011

**Site Area**300,000 m<sup>2</sup>**Gross Floor Area / GFA**1,160,800 m<sup>2</sup>**Floor Area Ratio / FAR**

3.9

**Building Height**+20.5 m / 25 m (Podium/  
Tower)**Blank Wall at Ground Level**

30%

**A**

To facilitate promotional activities, the atrium of Lok Fu Plaza's second phase mall is more spacious.

**B**

The public podium is available to residents, but also attracts other people into the complex.

**C**

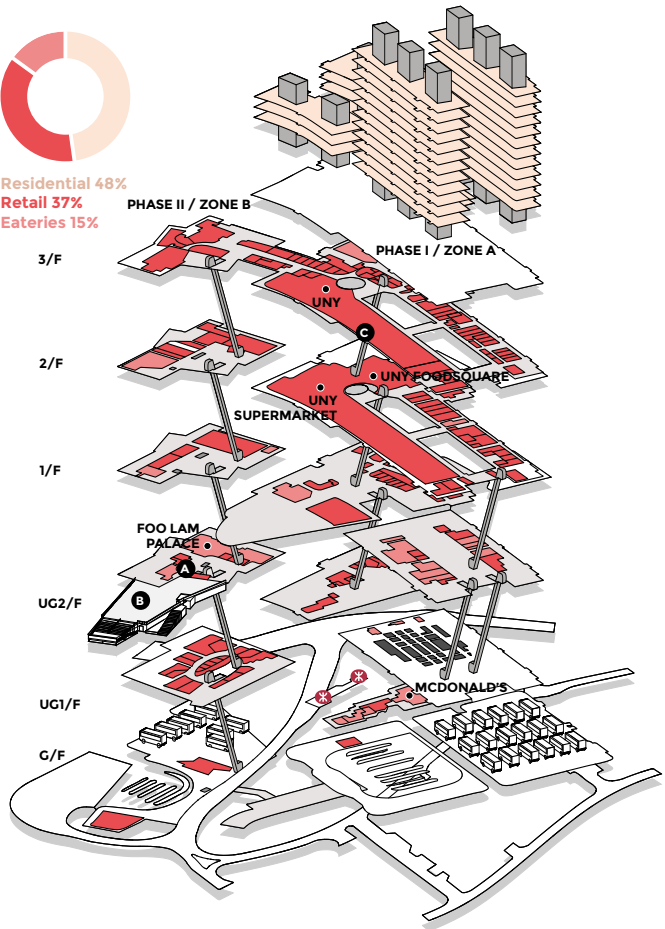
The wide circulation paths around the oval atrium facilitate pedestrian flows and allow for the placement of different commercial kiosks.



Residential 48%

Retail 37%

Eateries 15%





Hong Kong's Big Box with a Ball and Beehive Atrium

# MEGABOX

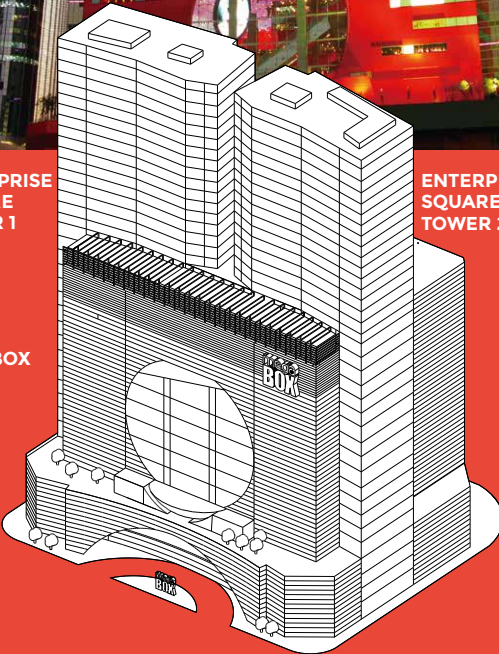
TYPE  
**3**  
Mall / Office



ENTERPRISE SQUARE TOWER 1

ENTERPRISE SQUARE TOWER 2

MEGABOX



**M**egaBox is located at the center of the rapidly growing East Kowloon district, which the government plans to develop into a new Central Business District. MegaBox is the only project within the area that contains major retail, entertainment, as well as two office towers called Enterprise Square 5.

Designed by the Jerde Partnership, the MegaBox redefines Big Box retail in a high-density city. Big Box retail such as IKEA and Toys'R Us, along with restaurants and entertainment, has been stacked in a 19-story mall. MegaBox is divided into four thematic areas for different demographics: fashion zone, home improvement zone, electrical products, and an entertainment and restaurant zone called EATertainment, which includes an IMAX theater, and an indoor ice rink that looks out to the city through a 30-meter-tall curtain wall.

A system called Totally Connected Modules (TCM) attempts to ease vertical people flows within the tall structure. Pedestrians are moved quickly between zones through express escalators that cut across multiple stories. Private cars can go all the way to the top zone with only three loops.

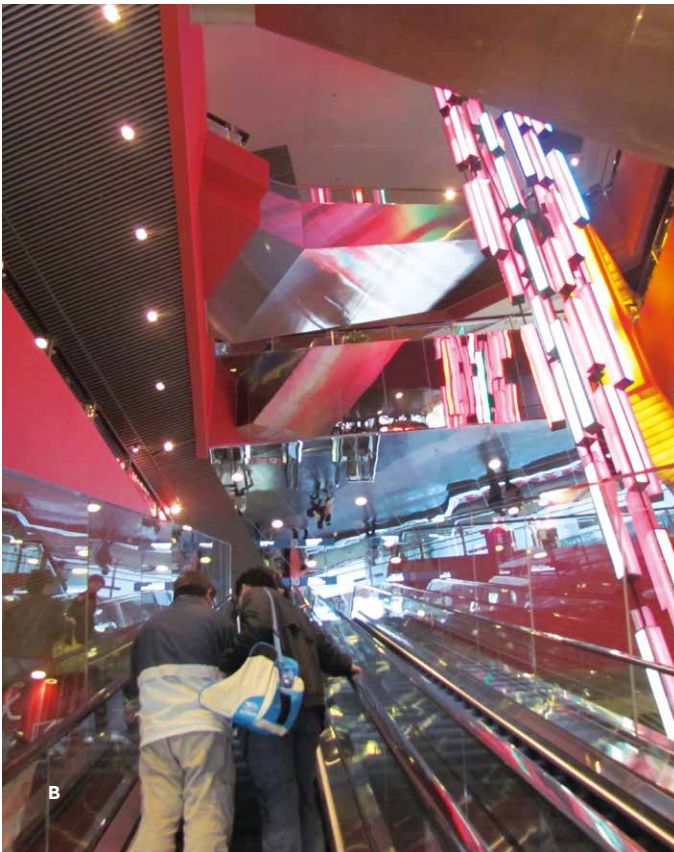
Unlike other large commercial developments in Hong Kong, MegaBox is not connected to Hong Kong's metro station, but offers a free shuttle bus service to the nearest MTR station.





**A**  
MegaBox's "Ball Atrium" breaks the big box with a six-story-tall glass facade that lets in sunlight and gives visitors a view of Kowloon.

**B**  
Deep red colors, bright lights, reflective surfaces, and electronic messages augment the mesmerizing maze of escalators. Separately themed areas add to the vertical retail experience.



**Visitors—Johnny Lee (age 38) and Alan Lee (age 6)**

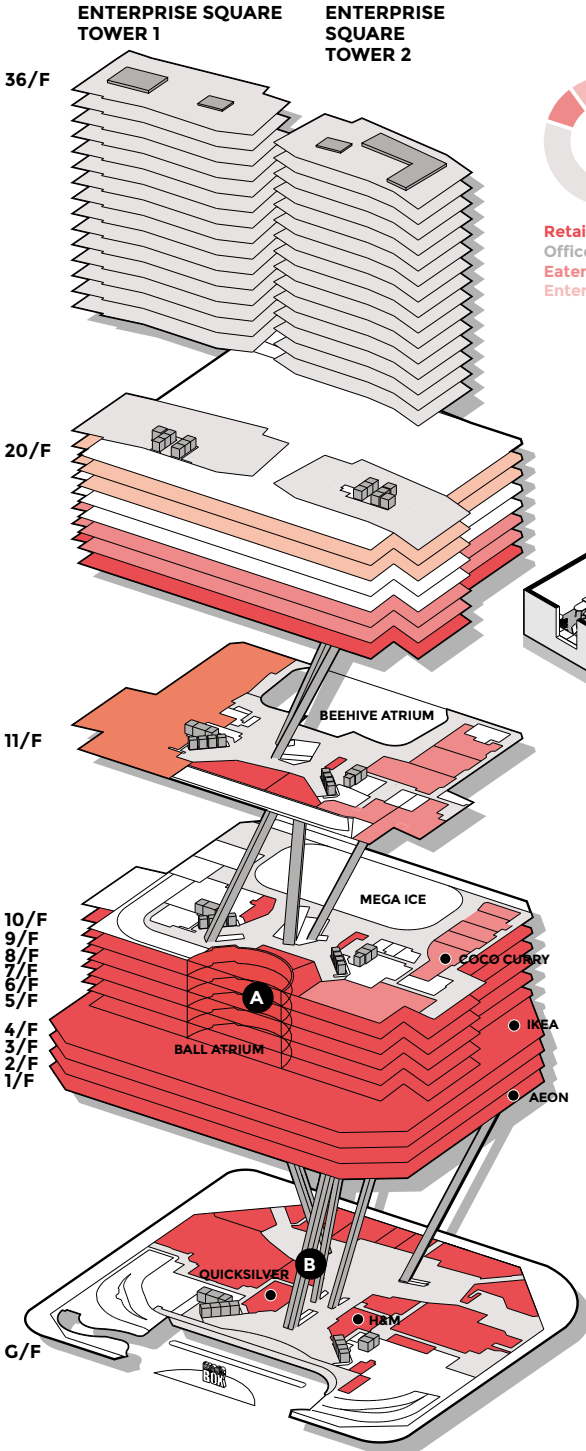
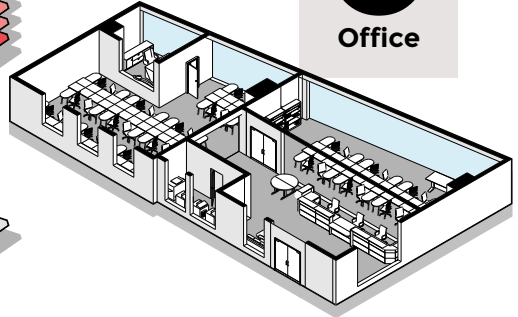
*I came to MegaBox to spend quality time with my son on a Sunday afternoon. There are few places in Hong Kong where both my son and I can be entertained at the same time without much worrying. We both are frequent visitors of MegaBox. My son finds the interior full of colors, so much colors that it sometimes makes him "dizzy," and there are many fun activities and adventures. I asked him why he likes MegaBox and he replied, "Many cool lights and cool cartoon characters! Many things to play and the furniture is my size!" (the children levels feature life-size cartoon figures and children's furniture).*

*I am happy that my son is excited and the surrounding environment arouses his imagination. It is rare in Hong Kong to find a place with so many activities, including ice-skating, an Imax theater, and a video game arcade, without being too crowded. I also appreciate that MegaBox has an IKEA and Suning electrical store where I can check up on the latest products while my son is happily occupied.*





Retail 45%  
Office 35%  
Eateries 10%  
Entertainment 10%



**Leo Paper Products Ltd., 36th Floor**  
Office size: 615 m<sup>2</sup>  
Office cost per month: 198,645 HKD  
Windows per floor area: 25%  
Operable windows: 12%

**Enterprise Square 5 Tower 1**  
Offices per floor: 3  
Office size: 550 m<sup>2</sup>  
Office cost per m<sup>2</sup>: 350 HKD

Enterprise Square 5 Tower 1 is one of two towers located within MegaBox. Floor-to-ceiling sized windows allow maximum sunlight penetration as well as a view of East Kowloon Harbour on the north. Floors are divided into one to six office spaces, depending on the tenants.

# CREDITS

## **Cover Design**

Anthony Lam

## **Layout Design**

Anthony Lam

## **Graphic Editing**

Anthony Lam

## **Infographics**

Footprints; Cross-sections; 312 Malls in Hong Kong; F.A.R. (Floor Area Ratio);

Blank Wall Ratio: Anthony Lam

17 Mall City Case Studies: Chi Fung Chan, Marty Chun Kit Chan

## **Case Studies**

Chungking Mansions: Bibiana Gomez Dangond

Golden Shopping Centre: Dong Lu

Tuen Mun Town Plaza: Li Yapeng

Lok Fu Plaza: He Yuan

Citywalk: Camille Anne Ang Tang

Sino Centre: Chi Fung Chan

Argyle Centre: Sun Cong

The Landmark: Wang Lin

Shun Tak Centre: Li Li

Times Square: Loc Hoi Tran

MegaBox: Marco Ng

Harbour City: Wang Xiachen

Cityplaza: Tara McGready

Pacific Place: Audrey Ma

IFC: Ye Xinxin

Langham Place: Wu Yue

Elements: Marty Chun Kit Chan