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“Buildings should serve people,
not the other way around”
— John Portman





Yong He Yuan

A quiet presence



Florent Nédélec

In an increasingly international world in which architects can — and do — work across multiple borders, one golden rule still applies everywhere: to toe the line and respect local conditions

TEXT: TERESA CHOW
PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF FLORENT NÉDÉLEC ARCHITECTURE

Hong Kong is the home of the skyscraper — latest statistics point to the territory having more buildings above 35m and more skyscrapers above 150m than any other city in the world. And with a population of seven million inhabitants in this high-density special administrative region, every plot is tiny and must dream big.

For New York-based Parisian architect Florent Nédélec, who recently completed The Jervois in Hong Kong, location isn't the primary issue when it comes to designing architecture. Whether he's building in established world-class destinations like New York or Paris, or in any of the other up-and-coming cities, his aim is to achieve sustainability in a modest form.



Instead of designing architecture that aims to astonish the world, then, Nédélec says his works are more about minimalist design with fine details. The Jervois, for example, was completed late last year. A 35-storey boutique hotel, it is erected on a modest 400sq-m plot right on the corner of bustling Jervois Street in Sheung Wan, and exemplifies how crucial it is to build according to scale. "The challenge here was, of course, not to be built out of scale. Sheung Wan as a whole is a very small site," says the architect. "Before I came to Hong Kong, I'd never worked in such small site ever."

Creating a bulky structure, therefore, was totally out of the question; the plot clearly called for a light form. It was also the vibrancy of the area that immediately captured Nédélec's imagination. "Sheung Wan is a dynamic place full of life. Being close to Central and SoHo have benefited it in different ways," he says.

As there was already so much happening along Jervois Street, Nédélec needed to take the circulation of pedestrian flow into consideration. There are two intersection points on the same street, one at Cleverly Street and the other at Jervois Street, with a little park on the side. "It was so important to ensure articulation along the path," says Nédélec. "This is not just about pedestrian flow, but also building a link for connection."

Thus, the design incorporates a series of white horizontal and vertical lines that tie together the geometry of the building and articulate the façades on Jervois and Cleverly streets into a succession of architectural glazed prisms. Another feature of Sheung Wan that influenced Nédélec's vision is the Modernist

architecture from the 1950s and '60s. "When you take off all the signage and air-conditioning units covering these buildings, they are quite beautiful – strict and geometrical," he notes. "I was trying to capture this at The Jervois, too."

In order to create a more open perception for the building, Nédélec chose a glass façade to extend the view from inside-out, while employing expansive corner windows brings in the light. "As you walk through the rooms at The Jervois, you feel as if you are walking through the city," he says. Interior design was handled by Christian Liaigre, and reflects a neutral, up-market aesthetic that sits well with the overall architecture.

Having worked with renowned architects such as Jean Nouvel and IM Pei has equipped Nédélec with a wealth of experience in manifesting various types of building typologies. His presence in Hong Kong has begun with office building and hospitality types, and his footprint has since spread to other parts of Asia with a residential tower in Taiwan to be complete by next year.

The Yong He Yuan Residences, located in Taipei, incorporate a woven pattern throughout the façades of the towers, made of a series of light striped grey granites and dark aluminum panels. The façades feature large square windows in between the interlaced horizontal and vertical elements of the pattern, and are generously recessed to provide additional shading and protection from the sun.

"When designing a building, it is dangerous to be too trendy or edgy," Nédélec says. "When we build, it is more important that the building can stand the test of time, because you don't want to see your design last for just five or 10 years."



靜待破曉

縱然今天的建築師已無分國界地參與世界各地的建築項目，但無論身處何地，始終如一的金科玉律，就是要尊重當地的建築環境。

撰文：TERESA CHOW
攝：FLORENT NÉDELÉC ARCHITECTURE



Yong He Yuan

香港高樓密佈，就最新數據顯示，越來越多大廈樓高超過30米，而超過50米的大廈數目更比其他城市多。這個密度高的特區人口已達七百萬，要在小小的彈丸之地立足便得懷著遠大夢想。

對於最近在香港完成The Jervois酒店住宅的駐紐約巴黎籍建築師Florent Nédeléc來說，地點不是建築設計的首要考慮。無論是在世界級城市如紐約或巴黎興建大廈，又或是在新興城市，他都會不諱不大地展示可持續的建築方法。

Florent的建築不是為了震驚世界，因為他的設計簡約而著重細節。以去年剛落成的The Jervois為例，這幢35層高精品酒店坐落上環熙攘的蘇杭街一塊只有4000平方米的地皮上，足以說明合比例的建築是非常重要的。他說：「這個項目的挑戰是大廈不能超出比例。整個上環都十分細小，在我來港以前從未接觸過如此細小的建築環境。」

這片地皮明顯只適合興建輕巧的建築，因此根本無須考慮龐大的結構。該區的繁盛立即啟發Florent的想像力，他說：「多采多姿的上環充滿活力，因鄰近中環和蘇杭街帶來不少生機。」

蘇杭街本身已很繁忙，於是Florent必須考慮行人流通的問題。The Jervois位於急庇街街和蘇杭街交界，旁邊有個小公園。Florent說：「確保通道暢順十分重要，不只是行人路，更要跟周遭環境建立連繫。」



The Jervois

因此，設計包含多條直橫交疊成幾何形狀的白色線條包裹著建築外牆，形成一幢稜柱形的玻璃建築，直立於急庇街街和蘇杭街交界。上環那些五六十年代的現代建築特色也影響了Florent的設計，他說：「撇除大廈上的招牌和冷氣機，抬頭向上望，其實那些又直又帶幾何形狀的建築物是很漂亮的。我也把這些建築神髓帶到The Jervois的設計中。」

為了讓建築更開揚，Florent運用了玻璃外牆來把室外景觀延伸到室內，同時採用大型的轉角窗引入陽光。他說：「走在The Jervois的房間內，你會感到像走在城市中。」The Jervois的室內設計由Christian Liaigre操刀，跟建築設計同樣散發出高尚的格調。

Florent曾跟建築大師如Jean Nouvel和IM Pei工作，對於處理不同的建築類型駕輕就熟。最初來港他主力在高層和酒店類型上大展拳腳，現在他的設計已涉足亞洲不同的角落，其中一幢建於台灣的住宅大廈將於明年落成。

位於台北的雍河院住宅大廈，外牆由灰色條紋花崗石及深色鋁板編織而成，於橫直間隔間裝上大型方格窗，漸漸由上至下凹進遮擋陽光。

Florent說：「當設計建築時，太前衛的構思是相當危險的。能設計歷久常新的建築才最重要，你也不想看到自己的設計只能維持五或十年的光譽吧。」