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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2019



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SOPHIE ASHBY: CREATIVE NOMAD
CERSAIE 2019: TILES IN FOCUS

DREAM TEAM

BY ELIZABETH KERR

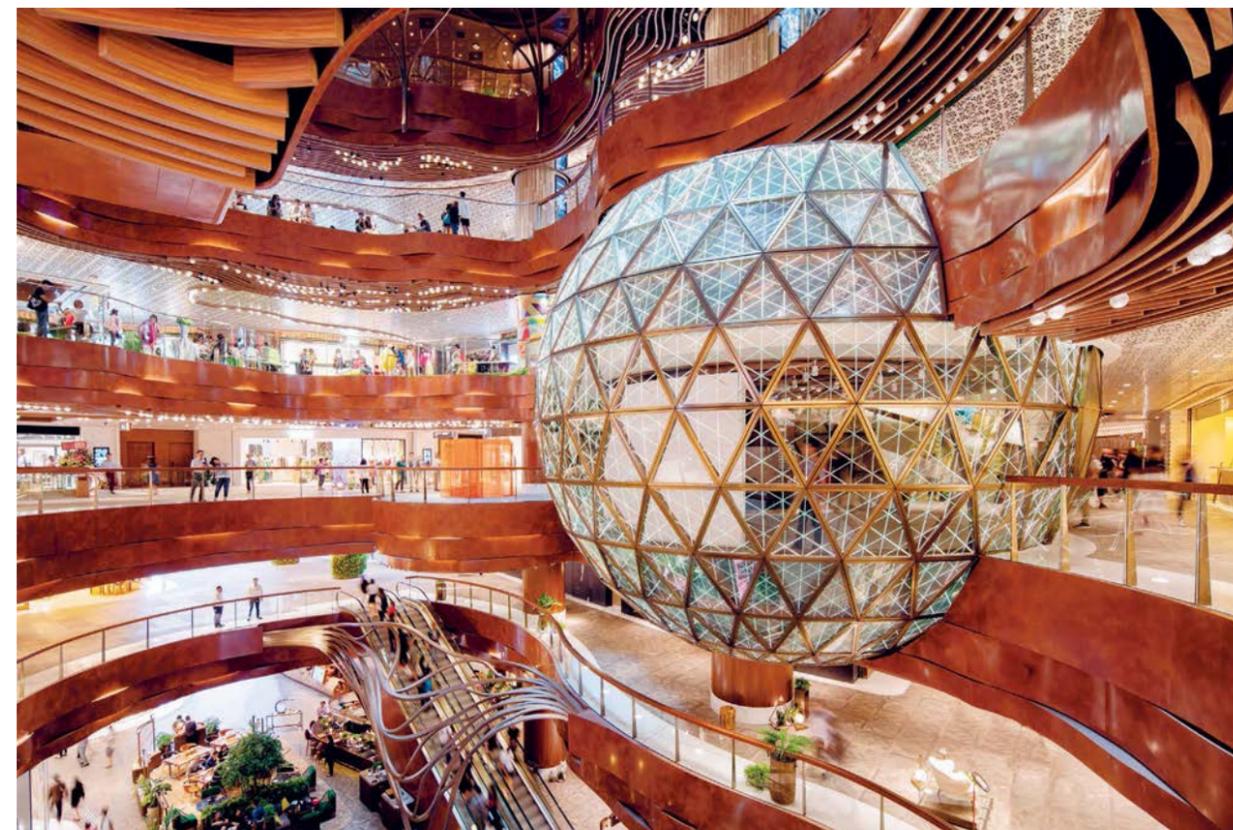
An international crew of designers joined forces for New World Development's art-forward Victoria Dockside retail destination, K11 MUSEA

The Oculus and the intricate ceiling required both modern technology and traditional craft skills.

Photos: New World Development / K11 MUSEA



Thailand's PLandscape created the green wall on K11 MUSEA's stepped limestone facade by KPF



K11 MUSEA's central atrium, known as the Opera Theatre, with the Gold Ball event space



The ceiling at the MUSE EDITION zone that houses the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) design store is retained from the original structure between the now-demolished New World Centre and Tokyu Department Store

Photos: New World Development / K11 MUSEA

It took dozens of creative minds to bring Hong Kong's latest retail experiment to fruition. By its own definition, developer New World is aiming high, building a new kind of retail experience in a city renowned for its shopping. The self-proclaimed Silicon Valley of Culture, K11 MUSEA, part of the huge Victoria Dockside regeneration (which also includes a luxury hotel, serviced apartments and offices) opened in August and quickly made it clear that it was like no other mall. With an ambition to become Hong Kong's most sophisticated museum-retail space as well as an incubator for creative talent, K11 MUSEA has been designed to appeal to millennials, tourists and local families in equal measure.

K11 MUSEA's 11ha, spanning 10 storeys, are defined visually by curvilinear interiors dominated by shades of wood browns, bronze and natural stone tones as a way to reflect and draw upon both nature and the surrounding city. The mall's 'phygital' personality – the marriage of physical and digital retail spaces – is the key gateway to navigating K11 MUSEA's ambitions. A purpose-designed app offers traditional shopping and dining services alongside guiding visitors on art and architecture tours through the building. Features highlighted by the app

include a rotating collection of more than 40 public artworks and commissions; the central atrium called the Opera Theatre; the glass latticework of the Gold Ball event space; the 185sqm (2,000sqf) culture venue, the Sunken Plaza; Rem Koolhaas and OMA's Kube (a communal kiosk for public dialogue); the Bohemian Garden rooftop, whose arches by James Corner Field Operations (JCFO) transition between indoor and out; the city's first Nature Discovery Park with sustainability themed educational features; and Design Republic on the third level, focusing on street art.

The forward-looking environment begins outside the mall, both on Salisbury Road and at the MTR transit level. Starting on the street, Kohn Pedersen Fox's (KPF) stepped limestone facade, overlooking the harbour, was completed with a green wall by Thailand's PLandscape. Certified LEED Gold and BEAM Plus Provisional by the Hong Kong Green Building Council, K11 MUSEA's shell signals a commitment to nature and sustainability, but it was the project's unique blend of innovative design, art and culture that attracted PLandscape. At a time when urban trends are increasingly vertical and dense, more creativity is demanded of landscape designers – a discipline that involves much more than simply integrating greenery.

“It [was] a challenge to maintain living plants in indoor spaces, so we employed a variety of creative displays and climate-controlled terrariums that introduce a vibrant touch of life into K11 MUSEA,” explains PLandscape managing director Wannaporn Phornprapha. “These displays are also important in the design narrative as they educate users about the importance and history of botany.” Like other points of entry, the outside green wall was designed to feel like a manor house in the city, and so she didn’t feel compelled to sync-up with the surrounding streets, harbour or adjacent Avenue of Stars.

Phornprapha was considering largely pedestrian traffic, while UK lighting specialists Speirs + Major principal Keith Bradshaw had a very different set of challenges when designing the main driveway that connects Victoria Dockside’s retail, office and residential elements. “This is where everything comes together and, in a way, it was the last thing to get designed,” says Bradshaw. “What’s the right atmosphere for all of that together?” Additionally, the potential for white-out conditions existed for drivers

heading towards the water, creating a need for a luminous ceiling. “It turned into a decorative luminous surface, but we always knew there had to be lights up there. If you don’t get enough light in the foreground, it’s blinding,” he adds. The final butterfly motif, with subtly shifting lights, guides drivers into the car park gracefully and safely, and also highlights the greenery under the canopy.

The final gateway to K11 MUSEA will arguably be its most popular. The public transit B2 level designed by Hong Kong-based Stefano Tordiglione’s ST Design spans more than 8,000sqm (85,000sqf) and features the mall’s food court – Food Playground. Tordiglione modelled the floor after the galleria of northern Italy to be “an artistic, ergonomic and theatrical spatial experience rather than a conventional shopping environment”.

“Retail is not about shopping any more, it’s about creating a one-of-a-kind experience for consumers, especially for those who crave a ‘phygital’ experience,” Tordiglione explains. “The new retail experience is also about inspiration and the chemical reaction with all the



‘The Street’ on B2: Gridded black sliding doors unify while allowing brands’ individuality

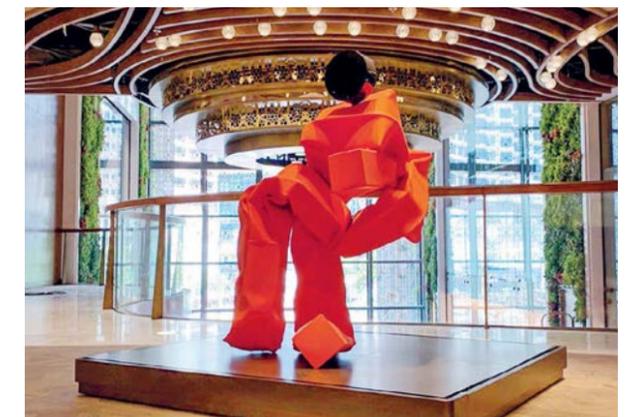
Photo: ST Design



Erwin Wurm, *Hot Dog Bus*



Samson Young, *Big Big Company (Mini Golf)*, 2019



Carol Bove, *Melty Legs*

artistic thoughts demonstrated in the area.” The B2 level has a vintage vibe, accented by high metallic ceilings, diverse floor tiling, including varied woods (in the food court) that demarcate zones, and black grid sliding shop doors that create a cohesive design theme while simultaneously allowing brands to display individuality. The result is a casual, breezy, social floor that bleeds seamlessly into the upper levels thanks to Speirs + Major’s streetscape scheme.

“We’re designing the street. Part of the vibrancy of retail environments has to be that you’re letting [different brands] work against each other to create a dynamic that comes with its own visual interest,” adds Bradshaw. “Our job is to make ‘the street’ and the art as engaging as possible and slow visitors down without thinking it’s more interesting than the shops.”

The design heart of K11 MUSEA is its soaring 33-metre Opera Theatre, topped with two seven-metre Oculus skylights. Designed by Hong Kong’s LAAB Architects, which contributed to the kiosks on the

Avenue of Stars, the cathedral ceiling and lights are partnered with escalating climbers (by William Lam of HK L&L) – the network of handmade, sculptural root-system designs that begin on the ground-floor escalators going up. LAAB also had a hand in JCFO’s arch elements, the lounge beneath the atrium and the nature park, making LAAB – along with Speirs + Major’s flexible track lighting and soft, irregular illumination in the atrium – one of K11 MUSEA’s defining contributors. Art and architecture are the foundation of the dual ‘A’s in the studio’s name, so it was a natural fit for the project. Design director Otto Ng recalls strolling under the district’s trees as a child, and used that as a starting point for bringing the local heritage into the mall. “The trees along Salisbury Road were mesmerising. I’m very glad that they were kept in the redevelopment. The trees are part of the local heritage and I want our architecture to resonate with it. I hope that our nature-inspired design can evoke a sense of place that connects the past with the present,” he says.

Photos: New World Development / K11 MUSEA



Peacock Playground in the Bohemian Garden by Denmark's Monstrum



Street art on Level 3 includes work from Katol@startfromzero



Kube, a communal kiosk for public dialogue, by Rem Koolhaas-led OMA team

Working from an 'Urban Nature' series, taken together the mall and Avenue of Stars create a holistic, inside-out experience that taps surrounding natural elements: chiefly water and trees. "We are fascinated by nature, especially its geometries and movement, and we sought to translate them into our architecture," Ng continues. The resulting escalator climbers, the Oculus, the hexagons of the Bohemian Garden (the shape is shared by much of Tordiglione's B2 tiling) and the robotic arms of the Harbour Kiosks tie the entire space together. The Oculus could be the single feature that best demonstrates the natural/built dynamic, as well as the one that demonstrates the studio's philosophy. In reality a vault sculpture, the skylights are a source of natural daylight — like the Pantheon or Portugal's Benagil Cave. LAAB is a proponent of digital design. "The Oculus is as an exemplar of what we called 'form follows nature,'" says Ng. "We were inspired by the beauty and the system of nature, but the intricate work, which consists of over 500 non-identical curved members, is unachievable without state-of-the-art construction technology together with artisanal craftsmanship."

Though art and architecture buffs, cinema-goers (the city's newest IMAX theatre is here) and shoppers are well catered to, family-friendly edutainment was always part of K11 MUSEA's creativity-first DNA. "We believe in the importance of play and its ability to produce creative breakthroughs and enrich the consumer's daily life through the power of creativity," explains Ole Barslund Nielsen, executive director and partner at Denmark's

Monstrum, the globe's pre-eminent play-space designer. Monstrum builds playgrounds so engaging children actively choose to explore the world around them. As every location is unique, Monstrum customises each in accordance with surrounding influences.

Challenges arose from the innately broad scope of users in the playground — from toddlers to the parents escorting them — something Nielsen calls a universal constant that gets tweaked according to location: sun must be considered in Dubai, accessibility legislation in the United States. For Hong Kong's tight harbour-side location and the final Peacock Playground in the Bohemian Garden, "we came up with the idea of building custom-designed play equipment... as a highlight of the space," says Nielsen. "It includes the reclining peahen, a group of peachicks and the nine-metre-tall Papa Peacock who has a flowing tail to climb."

K11 MUSEA is undeniably unique on Hong Kong's retail landscape; the integrated art and lack of garish fluorescent light alone make it stand out. Whether or not the concept gains traction will depend on how well it connects with users as something other than just another mall. "When you're outside, you're in Hong Kong. As you cross the threshold, you're willing to accept you're now in K11 MUSEA. If we can create a kind of continuity, we've done our job. It's about drawing people into the space," concludes Speirs + Major's Bradshaw. "Quite quickly you'll understand it's retail, but [that's] a small piece of the overall puzzle." ■

k11musea.com