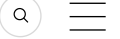


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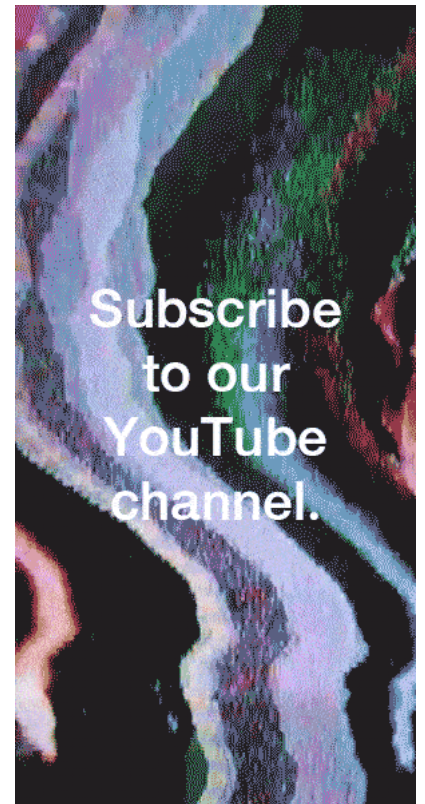
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CULTURE | ART AND DESIGN

Buro.'s guide to K11 Musea Hong Kong: Contemporary art, sustainable architecture, high design, photogenic shops, and exclusive restaurants

Retail heaven

Text: Aravin Sandran

05.02.20 [f](#) [t](#) [g+](#)

There couldn't be a more uncertain time for the opening of K11 Musea in Hong Kong. Anti-government protests have been ongoing since March last year and its first death from the coronavirus was reported in early February. As a result, its chief executive, Carrie Lam, has shut all but three border crossings with the mainland. Yet, its futuristic and inspiring vision for retail is admirable, and more importantly, hopeful for a city in distress.

Spearheaded by New World Development's 41-year-old executive chairman Adrian Cheng, the ambitious 10-years-in-the-making K11 Musea is part of the Group's \$2.6 billion project to revitalise Victoria Dockside. Situated in the Kowloon side of Victoria Harbour, it has been positioned as the "Silicon Valley of Culture". That proclamation isn't far from reality. Over 100 architecture and design professionals have poured over every single detail of the sprawling retail complex so meticulously that it would be reductive to even consider K11 Musea a shopping mall.



Take its grand Opera Theatre on the ground floor, for instance (pictured above). Made up of 12,000 square feet of aluminium panels that have been hand-painted and hand-tamped by local craftsman William Lam and LAAB, the lofty atrium astounds with undulating bronzed panels and programmable spotlights that make it seem like you're inside of one of those glowing trees in James Cameron's sci-fi fantasy *Avatar* (2009).



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If high design doesn't tickle your fancy, its dizzying directory of exclusive stores certainly will. Besides coveted high-end labels such as Yohji Yamamoto and Cartier, K11 Musea boasts Fortnum & Mason's only overseas outpost, Moda Operandi's first showroom in Asia, and the largest MoMA Design Store in Asia.

Boasting green certifications in environmental design and energy, the project has taken the concept of sustainability to new heights, quite literally. Besides the over 50,000 square feet of living walls — equivalent to the surface area of 18 tennis courts — and 180 plant species that bring a lush touch to both its limestone facade and its many liminal spaces, the Bohemian Garden on the seventh floor collects rainwater for irrigation while the Nature Discovery Park on the eighth floor features rentable plots for urban farming and a serene view of the Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront promenade.



It isn't called musea for nothing too. Pulling from the conglomerate's extensive collection of artworks by both leading international and local artists, highly regarded contemporary art is constantly on rotation around the entire site. When I visited in January, I spotted Korean sculptor Do-ho Suh's "Hub, London Studio" — a ghostly reimagining of his London studio in translucent orange polyester — sitting pretty on one of the floor landings. Elsewhere, Urs Fischer's "2", a headless disintegrating nude casually reclined. Outside, Katharina Grosse's spray gun-painted glass fibre installation (pictured above) is juxtaposed with Kube, a gold cube-shaped coffee kiosk designed by Rem Koolhaas and David Gianotten of respected Dutch architectural firm OMA.

K11 Musea's refreshing content isn't not up for contention; its culturally abundant retail experience is a much-needed antidote to today's stale brick-and-mortar environments. Yet, it might just be a matter of being at the right place at the wrong time. The despondent climate surrounding Hong Kong is deteriorating. Most recently, because of the coronavirus outbreak, American and United Airlines have suspended their Hong Kong service, further impacting Hong Kong's already weakened tourism sector, all while its retail footfall continues to plummet.



During my visit, I managed to catch up with one of the architects who worked on K11 Musea, Otto Ng of LAAB (pictured above) who believes the cultural destination will weather these tough times and become a must-visit locale for tourists and locals alike in the near future. Incidentally, he revealed that he hosted his wedding dinner on its scenic rooftop garden. "Adrian wanted to create a meaningful experience with a story to tell. We've respected craftsmanship and introduced innovations to connect people with various art and cultural disciplines in a retail context", he explained the novel intentions behind the project. Below, he recommends the most enticing spots for anyone who's looking for a safe space to escape.

Otto Ng of LAAB recommends...

Best place to take a picture for the 'gram: Opera Theatre

Best place to people-watch: Artisan Lounge



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Best place to reflect and relax: Bohemian Garden



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Best store to lose yourself in: The MoMA Design Store

Most unique plant species: All the mosses as they don't need any maintenance.

Best view: From the rooftop



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Favourite dish to eat at K11 Musea: You should try the char siew. There are several places that serve fantastic barbeque pork.

Item on your wish list: I take memories with me while I'm here, so it's not a single object.

K11 Musea is located at 18 Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong.

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