

Hong Kong / Shenzhen
By-City / By-Product
Doreen Heng Liu + Peter Ferretto

HONG KONG / SHENZHEN / BY-CITY / BY-PRODUCT

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Contemporary cities never start nor end; rather, they continuously adapt, mitigate, and mutate to remain relevant, expanding and contracting to survive. Several hundred million more people are expected to move to cities in East Asia over the next twenty years as economies shift from agriculture and manufacturing to services. When China's Pearl River Delta has overtaken Tokyo to become the world's largest urban area in both size and population, Hong Kong (HK) and Shenzhen (SZ) are in a strategic position, both geographically and politically, to examine the role of what our cities are, rather than what they might become.



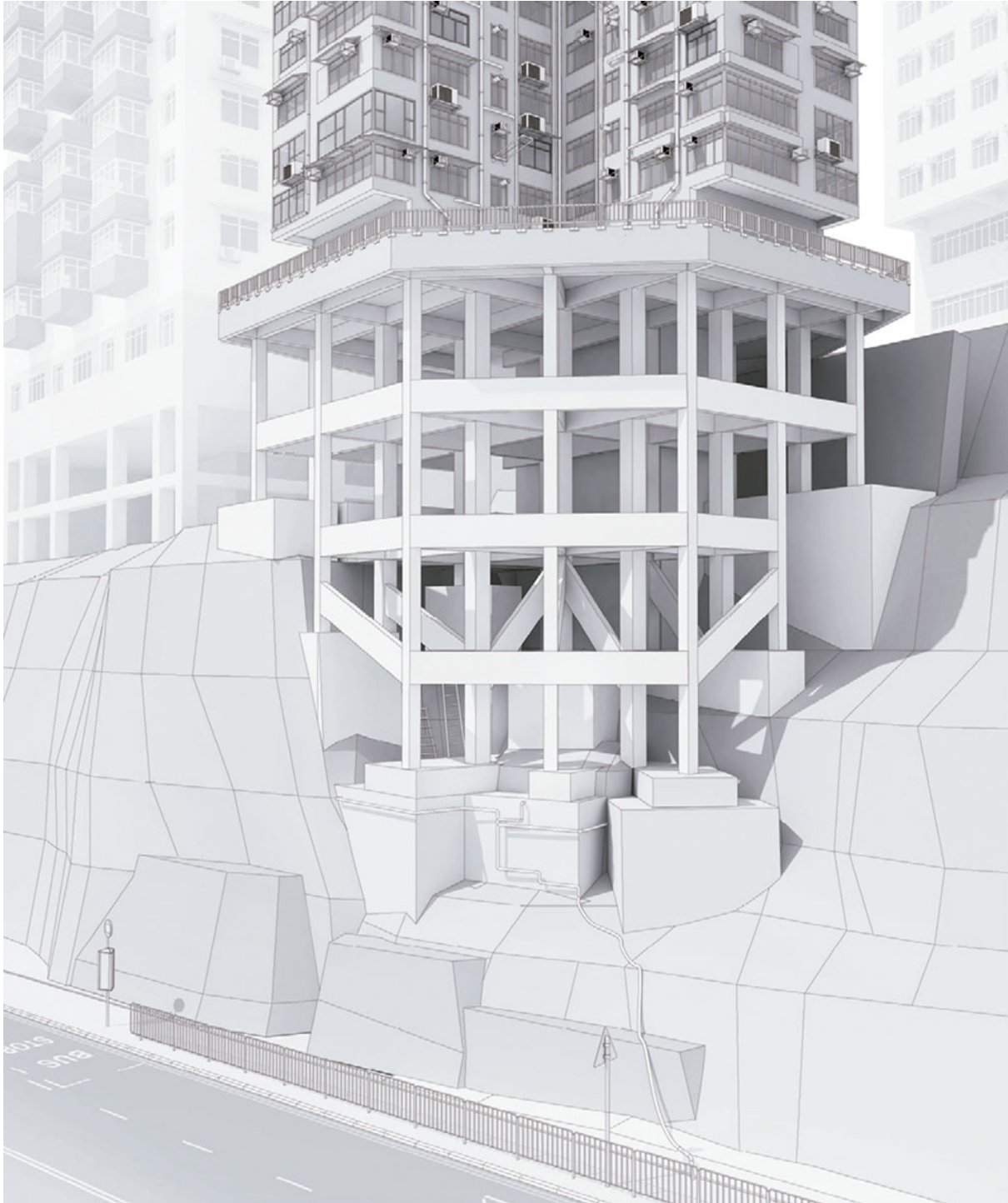
Shennan Road, Shenzhen.

Inspired by observations of real urban settings, *By-City / By-Product* examines the contemporary city as a series of conditions, no longer under the control of architects, urbanists, or planners, but governed by multiple coexisting agents. Hong Kong and Shenzhen are analyzed not through abstract postulations based on preconceived models, but by focusing on the present reality of the city, the actual urban everyday that stares at us in the face, the urban presence of the here and now.

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Condition/Engineered Landscape.

Both cities share a complex, interconnected, yet detached existence, yet they remain connected in their engineered nature, where their physical territory is constantly adapted to mitigate the changing conditions. Looking at these two cities from two different perspectives—micro inhabitation (HK) and macro temporality (SZ)—generates a discussion about cultural identity, that is, the way of life of the city in an age of globalization. The two fragments constructed aim to reveal an “urban dialect” unique to HK and SZ, one that avoids the stereotypical and preconceived analysis we so often fall prey to. “By-product” here refers to the leftover city that we inhabit: the interstitial, hidden, and marginal. By physically recreating one of these HK conditions in Seoul, and juxtaposing it with time fragments from South Korea, visitors are forced to ask questions, and through these questions engage with the content of the exhibition, which reveals different facets of these two cities.

Hong Kong Conditions

At the core of what defines an urban condition is the notion of how we inhabit a space. These two words—“inhabit” and “space”—are the essence behind adapting urban conditions, that is, how physical spaces mutate to accommodate human existence, participation, and engagement. Conditions do not follow predetermined or preconceived ideals of spatial inhabitation; rather, they reflect a constantly adapting space, a space that is arranged in association with time. The urban conditions we are confronted with in Hong Kong are based on the unique ground reality of the city; a landscape that constantly transforms, reliant on temporary existence. This kinetic urban reality, common to many Asian cities, generates a temporal background of overlaying circumstances, each associated with a unique by-product: planning codes, building regulations, government covenants, etc. To this effect urban conditions are relative entities, dependent on specific spatial relationships, which at first sight might not be evident, but only appear the more you digest the condition via observation, mapping, and drawing. These urban relationships, given Hong Kong's density, generate a general condition of intensity reliant on multiple networks of activity.

Shenzhen—Juxtaposition of Time

Thanks to its inherent geopolitical location in the Pearl River Delta and the immediate adjacency of

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Hong Kong, Shenzhen is actually an exemplar of the significant transformation that has taken place in China. In just over three decades, Shenzhen has experienced explosive growth—from a small frontier town with a population of 30,000 to a metropolis of 200 million residents—a process that might have taken hundreds of years in the industrial revolution of Western countries. Driven by the trinity of the sweeping globalization process, the powerful top-down practices of the Chinese government, and the egoic boost of becoming “top-of-the-town,” and using the methods of Western modern planning, Shenzhen has rapidly and miraculously developed an appearance that is commonly seen in Western cities and has become representative of the high efficiency city, where capital is admired above all else. In 2016, Shenzhen was number four in GDP in the country; it is now aimed at number one, and will probably get there in two years’ time. Obviously, without the presence of Hong Kong, Shenzhen would not have been born in the first place. The exhibition is about time and perception of time in Shenzhen, a full exploration of Shenzhen as “by-city/by-product” in relation to Hong Kong. Now, as a strong competitor and collaborator, Shenzhen is pursuing its own destiny. The exhibition also looks into the future of Shenzhen as the conclusion of this pursuit.

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