

Interview with ArchSD (Jacen and Helen)

Project Background 00'05''

Jacen: The Cattle Depot site was built in 1906 as a slaughterhouse and quarantine base. It mainly consisted of livestock sheds. It was out of service in 1999. And the front portion was renovated and converted into an Artist Village in 2001.

Design Concept 00'24''

Jacen: In the past 20 years, when we took up the site it has failed into ruin. Many people said that it was a pearl in the district but could not be reached. A lot of the trees have grown in a manner that they embrace existing architecture elements. It's a symbiosis situation. This phenomenon is explicitly obvious in the red brick column area. This landscape feature gives the motivation to make sure that both nature and architecture can coexist in every part of the design.

Ugly-duckling-turn-into-swan Places

1 - Ficus Trees Embrace Red Column 01'01''

Helen: The embracing of the Ficus trees to the red brick columns reassembling the images of the Angkor Wat, Cambodia to us. So we immediately think that these trees have to be preserved. The preservation is the most significant driving force behind us. If you call it, it can be the ugly-duckling at the time being. But now when you go there, the site is this warm. We would enjoy the spaces with the logistic ideas of the building itself and at the same time, the touchup environment.

2 - Preservation of Wild Weed Species 01'41''

Helen: Also for the wild species, the weed species that we found in neighbouring paper mills. They can be easily cleared up by a bulldozer. We didn't just clear the site. We asked the contractor to preserve every single weed. They just did a beautiful job. Among all the other efforts that we have planted, weed species is the most promising planting media that we have so far achieved.

3 - Preservation of A Significant Tree 02'10''

Helen: There is another tree that is in a poor amenity but it is in a very significant location. If we fall it, the whole site will feel so vacant. So at the first place, we try to preserve it. We let it be there. It went through a severe typhoon by that time. It partially collapsed but still the root was there. By the efforts we preserve this tree, it is now in appreciable form. The users can go there and appreciate the efforts of nature and the project team as well.

Community Design 02'48''

Jacen: We have always put the community in mind when we are designing. The Cattle Depot is at the very middle of three different precincts of To Kwa Wan. We took the opportunity to make the Art Park as a connector to the different precincts. We provide more connectivity, more openings, accesses and entrances so that people can come to the Park. We provide a lot of different viewing opportunities to see things and appreciate the landscape by different methods. Some make you look up, some make you look through, look downward that provide a kind of different experiences for people.

Legacy for future generations 3'28''

Jacen: Since the project has a heritage element in it, we adopted a design manner, not to be too imposing on the current situation. We made reversible designs. It can be demolished, removed, and leave what the previous situation almost unharmed. In case there is new information that can be fitted into the site, we can let the new design take place.

Helen: For landscape architects, please respect the tree preservation exercise and the books we have to follow but at the same time, we may try some efforts to see any gaps, any opportunities we can explore by preserving something that may not be valuable at the first sight, like weed species. Advanced thinking, free hand from the users and the clients would encourage a better, more innovative, more creative landscaping environment in the future.