



# FRIENDLY AND INCLUSIVE SPACES AWARDS

Category:  
3. Existing & Historic Buildings

Name of Project:  
Viva Blue House

Name of Architect(s):  
Kenneth Tse,  
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Hong Kong.

Name of Client:  
St. James's Settlement,  
Hong Kong.

## Project Description:

Date Completed: 06 /03 /2017

Viva Blue House is a ten years' project that demonstrates the collective forces of the social workers, residents, architects, consultants from various disciplines, and many other volunteers to protect a small community. "Retaining architecture, retaining people" was our starting mission. "Repairing architecture, repairing community" becomes our achievement.

## Images:



## History

This is a rare assembly of historic tenement houses built from 1920s to 1950s in the older part of Wan Chai, Hong Kong. They were once lived with the grass root level in a congested condition. Many of whom were migrated from the mainland China in 1950s. The usage of the tenement houses is not purely residential but mixed with shops at the ground level and a free school teaching simple Chinese, English and Arithmetics at the upper levels. There was even a martial art school cum bone-setting clinic set up by an apprentice of the famous Kung Fu legend Wang Fei-Hung.

Part of the building was painted blue in 1996 by the Government maintenance works section with some surplus paint intended for the Water Supplies Department. Since then, the residential building was commonly called the Blue House. Actually the cluster also include the Yellow House, Orange House (also because of their vivid external wall colours) and an open space at their rear facades.

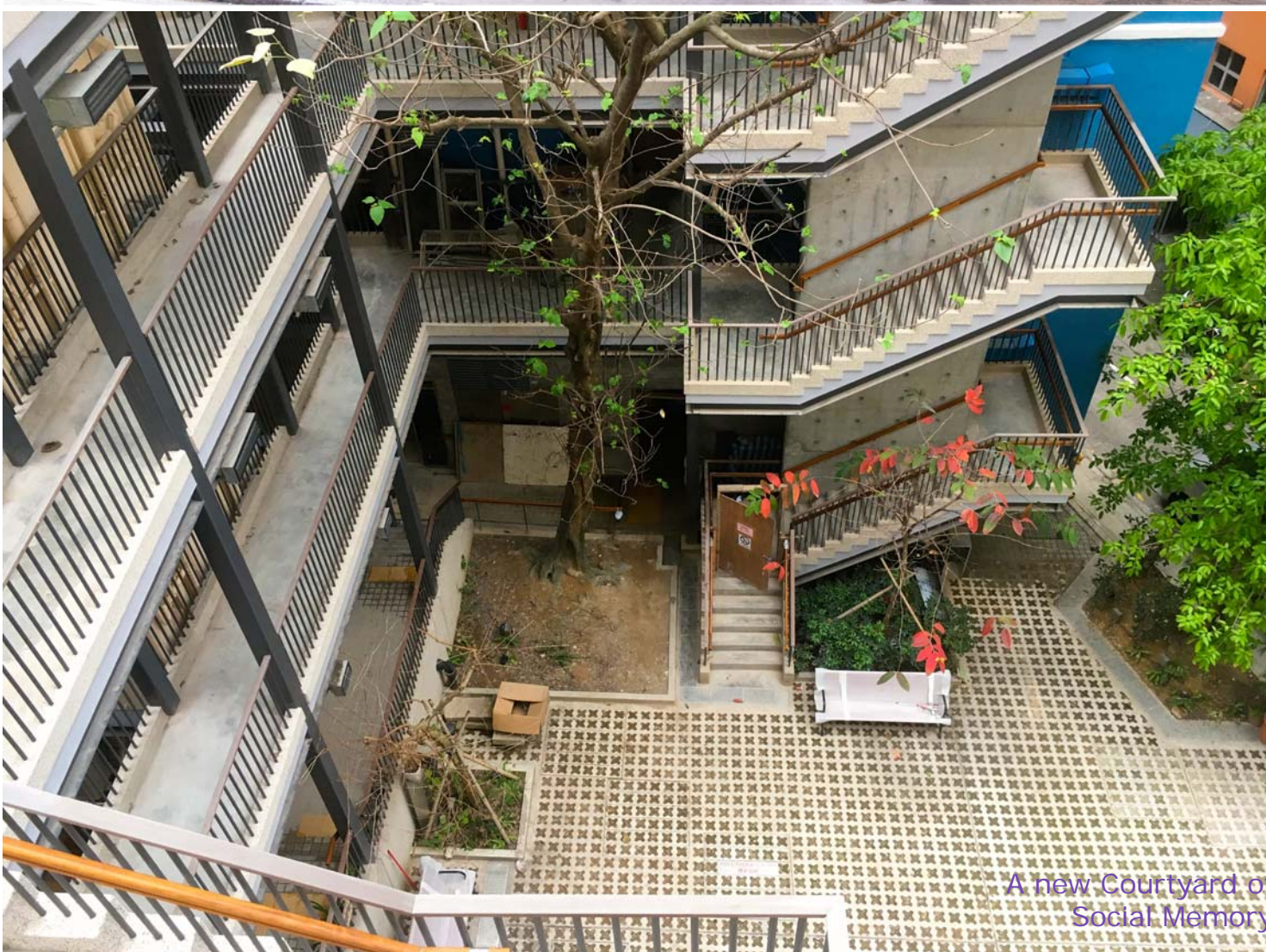
They are a rare typology still remain amidst the fast changing urban scene, and are assessed as grade I to III historical buildings in Hong Kong.

## Crisis & the Enlightenment of Residents

Blue House Cluster has been a home for many old people who have been living here for 2-3 generations. When they were threatened to move out simply because of the Initiative by the Urban Renewal Authority in 2007 to turn the buildings into a Tourist Centre, they were helpless. Soon with the help of social workers, architect, teachers, and volunteers, we formed a Resident Right Group and a Working Task Force. We rallied to object the URA's scheme and arrange numerous focus groups and working groups to work out the vision proposal of the place, which was then put forward to the government to petition for "Retaining Architecture, Retaining People".

After almost 4 years of effort, we succeeded in persuading the government to grant a sum of money for repair and upgrade the buildings. The local NGO St James's Settlement will operate the place. I had the honor to work with them since 2007 and witness the re-born of the Viva Blue House this year.

The new name Viva comes from the Latin word which means happiness always stay with Blue House.



## Action: Conservation + Intervention

People who have been living here for decades love the old relics such as the timber doors, windows, floral cement tiles, smells, noises of walking on timber stairs, and of course, the neighbors. At the same time, they are lacking of a proper kitchen, toilet, safe access and escape staircase, and reasonable size living space.

Conservation includes repairing the deteriorated building fabrics and reveal the authentic historical characters.

Intervention includes the design of a new lift, link bridge circulation, staircases, tree preservation, new toilet and kitchen, and a greener courtyard for social encounters.



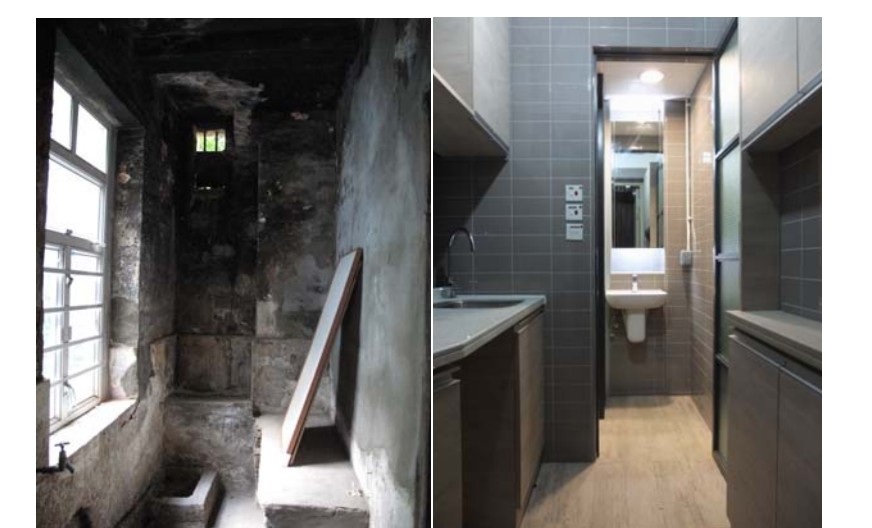
## Outcome 1

The new intervention enables the accessibility of the users, enhances their experience of appreciating the historical architecture, natural and built environment, and let them connect with people. The pedestrian flows from streets to the social enterprise shops at G/F and then via the rear door to the new courtyard. Almost a time tunnel is set up from old to new, and from new to old again.

## Outcome 2

The basic living provisions of kitchen and bathroom are now retro-fitted into the tenement house.

The link bridge system is carefully designed and positioned so as to maintain the existing trees. Now you can touch the leaves with your hand at a higher level.



Viva Blue House Project Team Members:

NGO Client  
Design Architect  
Lead / Project Architect  
Conservation Consultant  
Structural Engineer  
Building Services Engineer  
Planning Consultant

St. James's Settlement  
Meta4 Design Forum Ltd.  
LWK & Partners (HK) Ltd.  
LWK Conservation  
JMK Consulting Engineers Ltd.  
Aurecon Hong Kong Ltd.  
Kenneth To & Associates Ltd.