

DESIGN IN FOCUS

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Shangri-La Far Eastern Plaza Hotel

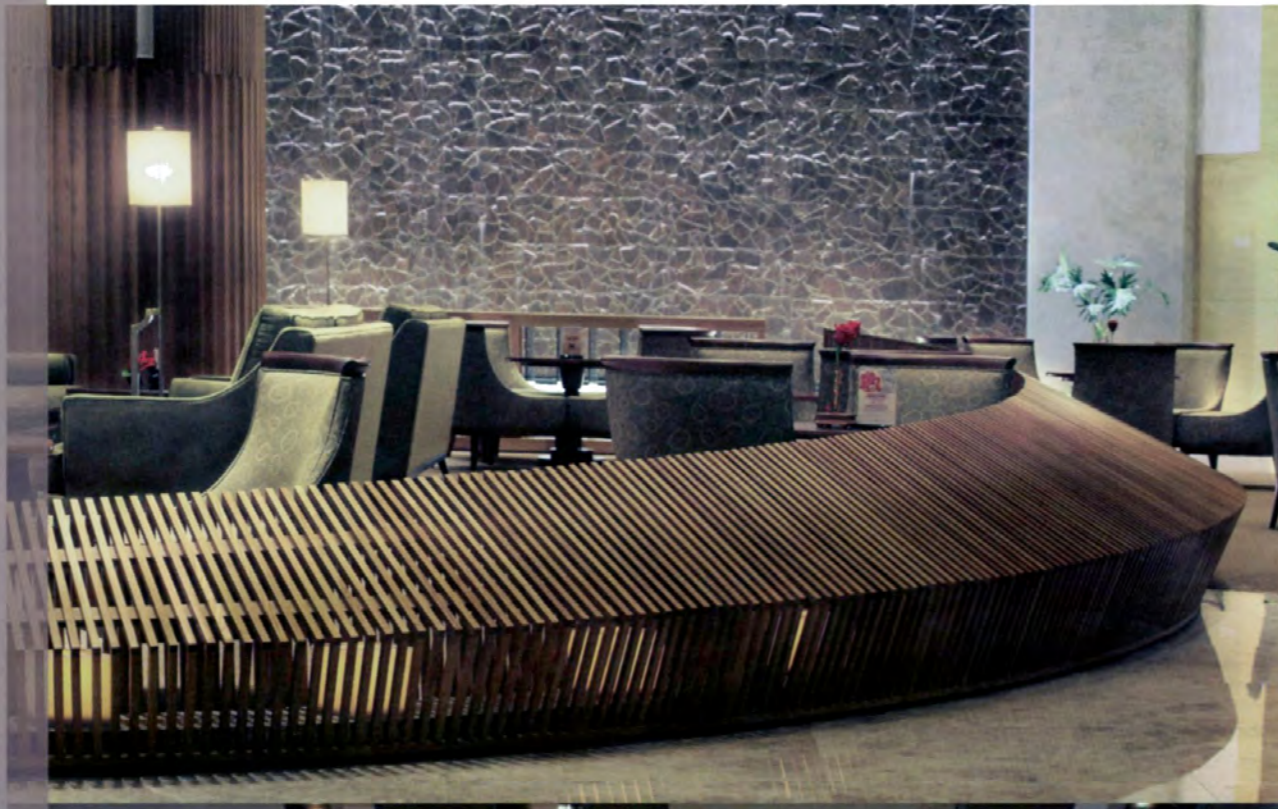
Photography by A. Chester Ong

AB Concept

Situated in the southern part of Taiwan, Tainan is the oldest city on the island with a rich and varied history. The building that houses Shangri-La Tainan was first erected in the 1990s, but was left abandoned for over a decade despite being the tallest building in the city. When AB Concept took over the interior design of the hotel, its mandate was to transform the property into one of the most luxurious international properties in Taiwan, yet still keep a comfortable, understated aesthetic that reflected the area's people and culture.

"To make this project part of the local culture, we chose to work with a minimal variation of materials that were kept consistent throughout the project," explains Ed Ng, Director of AB Concept. "This ties it all back together into a cohesive whole." To pack an immediate punch into the firm's first hotel project in Taiwan, AB Concept created an airy lobby with a three-storey high wooden chandelier as its focal point. Layers of light peek through wooden panels of a part-fixture, part-column chandelier, with its colour and texture echoed in other columns within the lobby.

The liberal use of wood is evident throughout the hotel, with a series of screens in each of the restaurants that reference the lobby. "The screens were introduced to deal with the circular shape of the architecture, to give people a sense of direction," says Ng. "Each of the screens were designed to tie in with the concept of each of the areas. Further to its dividing function, it also creates a layering effect within the space."



Company name: AB Concept Ltd.

Date established: 1999

Director(s): Ed Ng, Terence Ngan

Total number of staff: 30

Contact details: 1801 Leighton Centre, 77 Leighton Road, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. Tel: +852 2525 2428, www.abconcept.com.hk

Notable projects: Hotel Jen, Hong Kong; Lanson Place Central Park Residence, Beijing; Shangri-La's Far Eastern Plaza Hotel, Tainan

Projects in the pipeline: W Hotels in Yokohama and Bali; French Restaurant in IFC; Jeddah Corniche Hotel & Residence Tower in Saudi Arabia

Most recent honour: Winner of the 2009 Hospitality Design (HD) Awards in the Mid-range/Economy Hotel category for Hotel Jen

Design hero: Andree Putman

Worst thing about practising in Hong Kong: "The mentality in Hong Kong for maximum cost efficiency sometimes beyond limits sacrifices the intangible value of aesthetic emotion."

Most cherished designer object: "i-phone"

