

# Arty Privy Hong Kong Arts Centre 30th Anniversary Designer Toilets Series

Julia Lau



## Introduction & Background

"Art Privy" is a public art project done by students and graduates of Hong Kong Arts Centre (HKAC), together with architect designers who support the HKAC. The group collaborated on this experimental project which was initiated by the "Building Committee\*" of HKAC to commemorate the 30th anniversary of HKAC.

5 floors of toilets accessible to the public were selected and assigned to different designers and artists to design a site specific toilet interior design to suit the unique explorative & experimental spirit of HKAC.

We encourage you to explore and experience these yourself whenever you are in the vicinity, they are located at 5/F (Pao Gallery), 4/F (Jockey Club Gallery/Pumpernickel Café), 3/F (Experimental Gallery), UB/F (Agnes b Cinema). & LB/F (McAulay Studio). There are also "Guided Map" & "Guided Tours" available on site. Email: [guidedtour@hkac.org.hk](mailto:guidedtour@hkac.org.hk)

Ms Fiona Wong, who is HKAC tutor as well as our local renowned practicing ceramic artist, had kindly assisted to introduce and coordinate various selected artists to materialize this experimental project. Thanks to her dedicated effort.

We introduced here below the concept design statement of each of the designer's/artists' team revealing their thoughts when designing these functional spaces and gem pieces.

Funds came from "Jockey Club". Main material sponsor is "Roca", who kindly sponsored all the fittings for this special series of experimental art project; other sponsors include St Glas & Formica. The project would not have been possible without their support.

\*Building Committee Members – Mr Bryant Lu, Ms Julia Lau, Mr K K Kwan, Mr Peter Yuen, Mr Sammy Mak

## Artist Statement

Ms Fiona Wong, teacher of Hong Kong Arts Centre teaching ceramics, had selected a team of 10 CERAMICS ARTISTS to design and execute for this interesting and challenging task on the 3/F restrooms. Below are their statement on their artwork.

### 1. Ray Chan See Kwong

"Men and women may not be as different as we thought, even in urination."

### 2. Ida Yu Pui Wah

"Time for us to see"

### 3. Antonio Wong Ngok Tung

Male toilet paper said: "Men are always horny, so we have horns", Female toilet paper replied: "Then we should have holes as ladies are always holly!".

### 4. Fian Choi Fai Yin

"Going to toilet is trivial yet indispensable. Some fun, maybe gossiping... gather to talk 'sesame & green bean'."

### 5. Jessie Lam

"aura"

### 6. Lau Wang Tat

"To pick a flower" is a euphemism meaning "to go to the toilet." The art pieces I have created take on a "literal" interpretation of this euphemism. Using familiar Japanese animation characters Mami and Kenjiro in this toilet setting, I had them both pick out their extraordinary flower.

### 7. Ben Yau Man Pun

"Soap" - In my childhood, I remember I used a piece of soap instead of the shower gel in my family. The soap will be decrease in its volume and transform in its shape. I found different shape of the used soap imply how people deal with them. In the male toilet, I chose the mold pressing method to make the soap by clay. I tried to use it to soap my hands. In female toilet, I tried to slip cast the soap by the mixture of clay slip and soap, then I let it float on water and wait for it deform.

### 8. Siu Kam Han

A den for woman is a place full of beautiful things. The one for man is a primitive place, quite, comfort and full of love. It is a placenta.

### 8. Suzy Cheung Kai Sun

Toilet, big or small, is not just a place of privacy but a sanctuary for the release of one's energy, whether it is physical need or emanation of creative ideas. When these energies run smooth, the joy of one's sense of liberty is portrayed as a fish swimming freely in the ocean or as refresh as taking a dip in a private pool.

### 9. Winus Lee

Toilet is for both men and women, a place of privacy and fantasy.

### 10. Blanche Ho Man-ye

Water cohere, drop with a lullaby sound and down underground, as life itself. Water cycle and the life cycle are one.

### 1. 5/F (Pao Gallery)

**Designed by : Anderson Lee, Index Architecture Limited**

First inspired by the imagery of the famous Fountain by Marcel Duchamp (or R. Mutt?) and his artistic act,\* the project examined the relationship between the object and to which the context it was placed in/with/within, and the very own act of placing it. The varied meanings of "context" in different instances are also of our interests: context as an institution for an art museum, and context as an architectural style for a building. These generated our idea of using dried straw as the primary material for the ceiling of the bathroom. The lighting pendants emerge from the dried straw could be read as surrealistic flowers growing upside down; the ivy-like conduits grow into its adjacent surfaces to become wall sconces; the dark shiny sheet vinyl floor reflects the lights and becomes the twinkled sky while the straw-filled ceiling could be read as the ground. The inversion of the bathroom's ground and ceiling attempts to show how the object defines its context in this instance.

In retrospect, one could also argue that this bathroom pays homage to its context, Hong Kong Arts Centre. Finished in the same year as George Pompidou Centre in Paris (1977), Hong Kong Arts Centre takes pride in its architectural aesthetics through the exposed building structural and mechanical systems. As a reflection to the architectural era that the building was conceived and built, our work takes on this idea of exposing all the electrical conduits, plumbing and ducting network to optimize the bathroom's function.

Like many contemporary artworks, our project is meant to be interpretative in any way. For us, the essence of any architectural work lies in its ability to emanate multiple meanings from a single concept. We invite you to approach this bathroom as a new acquaintance, and to find the interpretation that fits you.

\*Marcel Duchamp(1887-1968) was an artist once proposed to put a urinal signed with the fake artist name "R.MUTT" inside an art exhibition and entitled it Fountain in order to explore and question the role of artwork and artist in a museum setting.

### 2. 4/F (Jockey Club Gallery/ Pumpemickel Café)

**Designer & Artists Team**

**Architect : Mr. Derrick K.L. Tsang**

**Artist : Ms. Mouse W.K. Chung, Mr.**

**Dez K.P. Leung, Ms. Kit K.C.**

**Poon, Ms. Agatha Y.L. Sze &**

**Ms. Meli P.Y. Yeung**

**Titled : Searching for New Dialogue and Breakthrough**

Why can't it be done differently? A common question often asked by a group of uncommon people. Double-acted as additional galleries for the Hong Kong Arts Centre, the recently renovated lavatories at 4/f are specially designed as unique venues for exhibiting purposes. The new experience in lavatories aims at examining our reaction and expectation towards the unexpected, as well as challenging the traditional use of public space and values of social norms.

The internal white walls enclosing the lavatories become an exclusive platform, generating vibrant and unlimited themes on walls. It can be illustrations or works by artists and designers, scenes of a forthcoming feature film in Agnès b. CINEMA!, commercials or any random themes that one may think of. The possibilities are simply endless and it can be updated frequently. Acting as a sketch-book, this very wall encourages enthusiasts in HKAC to constantly fill and change the pages.

The debut installation was orchestrated by Hong Kong Art School (HKAS), of which an illustrated backdrop was set up, framing selected works of the talented students nurtured by HKAS.

### 3. 3/F (Experimental Gallery)

**Designer & Artists Team**

**Architect : Ms. Julia Lau, Public Art TRACES**

**Artists : Graduates from Hong Kong Art School 2001 - 2008**

**Titled : Extended Spirit**

The design concept is to extend the spirit of the original Tao Ho design concept of Hong Kong Arts Centre (HKAC)

The signature triangular feature is seen throughout the architectural design – the building form, the floor plan, the façade, the structural floor slab, door design and various architectural motifs. This triangular motif is reinterpreted on the wall and ceiling of the bathrooms. As HKAC was set up to allow artists to experiment and reveal their work, ceramic artists of the Hong Kong Art School were invited to create artworks specifically for this public art project. This integration between 'Art and Architecture' becomes the centerpiece of the design.

The use of 'glass block' is a deliberate attempt to recall the material once used in HKAC in the original design. It is both 'structure' and 'finish', and allows light to pass through. It was once used facing the light well.

The 9 circles of various sizes are taken from the HKAC logo are recomposed for different uses as mirrors or light.

The lighting and mood can only be experienced. The design as a whole is intended for visitors to explore, enjoy and interpret for themselves.

### 4. UB/F (Upper Basement – Agnes b. Cinema)

**Designed by : Ida Sze and Billy Chan**

**Titled : Black Hill on the Snowy Ground**

Agnès b. CINEMA! at the UB floor has been a popular spot and one of the favourites of film-lovers. Aiming at continuing the theatrical atmosphere through the floor, a scenic 'second' nature - Black Hill on the Snowy Ground was created in the bathroom there. By using primitive materials and colors to resemble a wintery scenery, a cinematic experience was generated to visitors to this private space. The original separated male and female lavatories were merged as one linear bathroom with cubicles of female bathroom. Partitions of homogenous rubber-cladded 'Trespa' boards formed the 'Black Hill' that stretched across the room to tie all cubicles. With the

individual basin and sanitary fittings in each cubicle, it creates tiny loos hidden from the outside world. The black and white scenery is a total alienation to the usual perception as a bathroom which dramatizes the visitors' conception. Black rubber film is applied to the external face of the partition, which can often be found as an inner layer for children's playground. This brings about a subtle rock-like texture and stratified appearance to the exterior. The floor and walls were wrapped with rubbed grano, putting the white and shining 'snowy' background in contrast with the black and solid 'hilly' rubber wall.

### 5. LB/F (Lower Basement – MaAulay Studio)

**Designed by : Bernard Chang**

**Titled**

**: From Toilet of Equal Opportunities (TEO) to Toilet of Absolute Order (TAO)**

The Project began with an observation of the behavior of toilet-going or perhaps a commentary on regulations of Hong Kong. After the movie show there is always a long queue for the female restroom, but the restroom of the opposite sex usually remains quite available. This situation creates discomfort for both sexes: woman wanting to use the facilities and her significant half waiting around restroom vestibule train-spotting.

To be socially responsible, the proposal of uni-sex toilets for Hong Kong Arts Centre Theatre floor seems appropriate. Just imagine: everyone has an equal chance of getting to the toilets, so fair, so Utopian! This is what Toilet of Equal Opportunities is about. Yet let's not forget we are in Hong Kong where propositions face oppositions; and oftentimes, voice of oppositions prevails.

Utopia becomes Dystopia is indeed what we experience in our everyday life. Toilet of Absolute Order (TAO) is a product of Dystopia, and we shall observe the rules:

Male only - No female admittance;  
Watch your child - No yelling and screaming;  
Follow the flow - No turning backward;  
Focus when using urinal - No contact to your neighbors;  
Lock cubical when in use - No sharing;  
Wash your hands always - No other water activities;  
Use hand-dryer - No dripping in public area.

Do you think they are insane? Yes they are.

This is what the design of TAO is about: to provoke you with an unusual contrast of colors, textures, lighting in the domain where privacy meets the public realm. One engages and reacts to TAO as he does to the world of Dystopia.

#### Julia Lau

Architecture Graduate from University of Oregon (School of Architecture & Allied Arts).

Aspire to advocate "arts + architecture to be integrated with urban planning & design" to create an inspirational and pleasing environment for the community to enjoy.