



Forgetting Macau

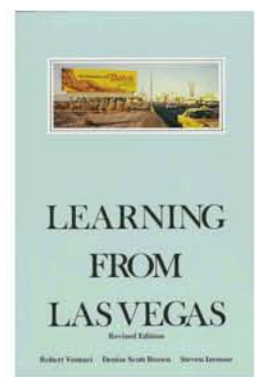
Tom Verebes Studio

Master of Architecture Programme, MArch I Studio, 2010-2011

The University of Hong Kong

*Would you trust yourself to say which is a 'living' form and which is not?
What is it that encourages us to typecast some forms as those made by life,
and others and the product of the non-living world?"*

Philip Ball, Nature's Patterns: Shapes



Learning From Las Vegas, 1965

This MArch II Design Studio focused on the Cotai Strip in Macau as the context within which a critical approach towards architecture and urbanism was pursued through the application of new spatial paradigms and experimental design methodologies.

In 1965, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown and Steve Izenour conducted a studio at Yale University which focussed on an analysis of Las Vegas. The impact of their research unleashed new valorisation of the raw and unashamed reality of the contemporary American city, encapsulated in their seminal manifesto of pop urbanism, *Learning From Las Vegas*. Through its profound influence on a generation of architects across the world, this document helped to shape the moral code of post-modernism through its endorsement of the mid-twentieth American city, as unorthodox and undesirable as it was deemed by modernist architects.

Similar to Las Vegas, the Cotai Strip is also a fabricated form of urbanism dedicated to a specific kind of tourism, where the prime reasons for its existence are gambling, shopping, entertainment and leisure. Whereas Las Vegas grew out of the blankness of the desert, Cotai is reclaimed from the sea and has definite edges. Old Macau represents an aberration in the history of colonialism in Asia – a residual post-colonial Mediterranean city at the mouth of the Pearl River. Discarded by the masterplanners and architects as the model of urbanism to replicate in Cotai, old Macau seems as innocuous a model for contemporary urbanisation to emulate, as Cotai is as vacuous a model to pursue. Cotai dismisses old Macau, only tenuously linked geographically, infrastructurally, and politically to the city it forgets in its making. Cotai's developers, planners and architects also forgot to build a city. The street, plaza, promenade, and neighbourhood, along with countless other seemingly historical urban spatial tropes and types, were forgotten in the making of Cotai, or if they help shape its urbanism, these spaces become wholly interiorised as the ultimate form of interior urbanism. At the least, Cotai is questionable as a general model of urbanisation, and at most, it can be judged to be ideologically bankrupt as a model of twentieth century urbanisation. Despite this apparent vacuum, the studio learnt from Cotai, and this studio endeavoured to chart the future of Cotai.

STUDIO BRIEF

As a result of the 2008 global financial crisis, the development plan for the Cotai Strip, along with several of its extra-large mixed-use casino developments, remain unfinished. The primary task of the studio was to "complete" the unfinished urbanism of Cotai. The aim was to design a living city, and in doing, so, it was perhaps necessary to forget everything of the

existing context, both of old Macau and Cotai, and to imagine an entirely new kind of urbanism. The studio project focused on the pattern, scale and grain of large scale architectural design (or small urbanism), differentiated in relation to specific user, contextual, infrastructural and environmental information. Emphasising associative design methodologies related to the transformation of spatial typologies, and their associated economic, social and political realms, the studio aimed to prototype new kinds of urban and architectural spaces, programmes, structures, and systems.

C21 PATTERN BOOK

This studio developed recursive, non-linear design methods, with design outcomes resulting from the playing out of simple parameters, with clearly stated performance criteria. Architecture and urbanism can be understood as the organisation of legible, mathematically discernable patterns. The studio developed a Pattern Book of computationally controlled complex 2-D and 3-D patterns, generated from simple rules and relationships, emphasising non-repetitive organisational patterns which undergo dynamic processes of formation. In this light, morphology is deemed an effect of the forces that shape its making, rather than as a static, immutable spatial and material condition. The Pattern Book was initially conceived as 2-dimensional patterns, followed by their elaboration as abstract three dimensional architectural and urban patterns, through laser cut models, cnc-milling, 3d prints, along with more manually machined models. The goal was to generate new spatial models, typologies and structures, with which to carry out design proposals at the masterplanning and building scale.

3-DIMENSIONAL & 4-DIMENSIONAL MASTEPLANNING

The discourses and practises of architecture and urbanism often assume form to be highly stable and permanent. Challenging the notion of the completeness of the city, the studio speculated on systemic, scenario-based and time-based 3-D masterplans, in which strategies for urban growth, change, and evolution over several years. Emphasising large scale architecture/urban design, student teams proposed variable urban masterplans, within which specific territories were elaborated as architectural design proposals.

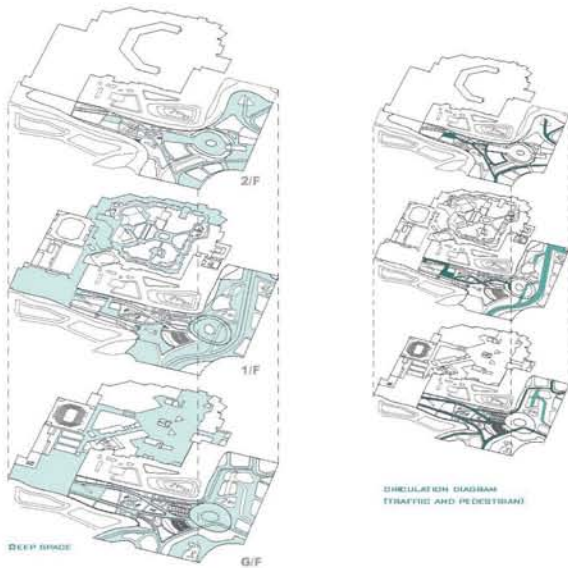
Students:

CHAN Chi Yin Stephen	MOK Chui Ha Tracy
CHAN Shu Kei Peter	WONG Wing Yee Edward
GAO Jinghang Ryan	YAM Sai Tung Tony
GUO Jia Jeff	YEE Kin Hang Sammy
LAI Wing Fung William	YEUNG Hiu Lei Samuel
LO Yee Cheung Adrian	

GAO Jinghang Ryan, GUO Jia Jeff, LO Yee Cheung Adrian

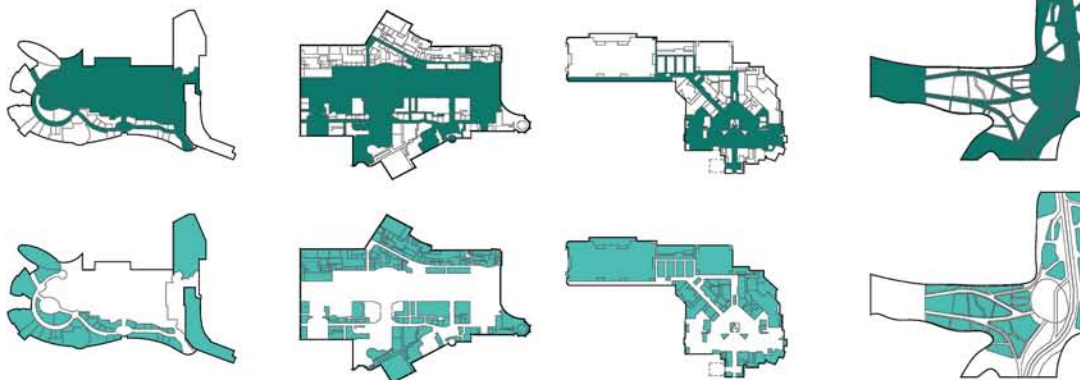
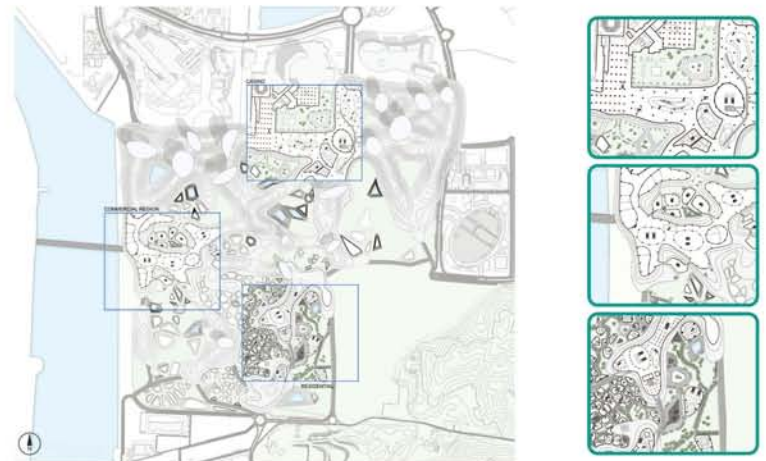
Deep space is the pre-eminent spatial arrangement in all of the Cotai developments, though each of them is differentiated through their specific branding identity and planning layout. In response to the questionable Cotai masterplan, this project proposed an adaptive master plan, embedding mechanisms to reaction to different scenarios which play out parameters associated to density, coverage, landscape to

building ratio, massing, and form. The Architectural proposal is an exploration of the continuous flow of deep space with discrete pockets of program, emphasizing the spatial continuity from the neighbouring Venetian casino complex. Connected surfaces / slopes and atriums are used to articulate both circulation and visual connection of the spatial flows between the existing casino complex and the proposed extension to it.



Axonometric plans of three levels, demonstrating the continuity of deep space of the existing and proposed urban interiors (LO Yee Cheung Adrian)

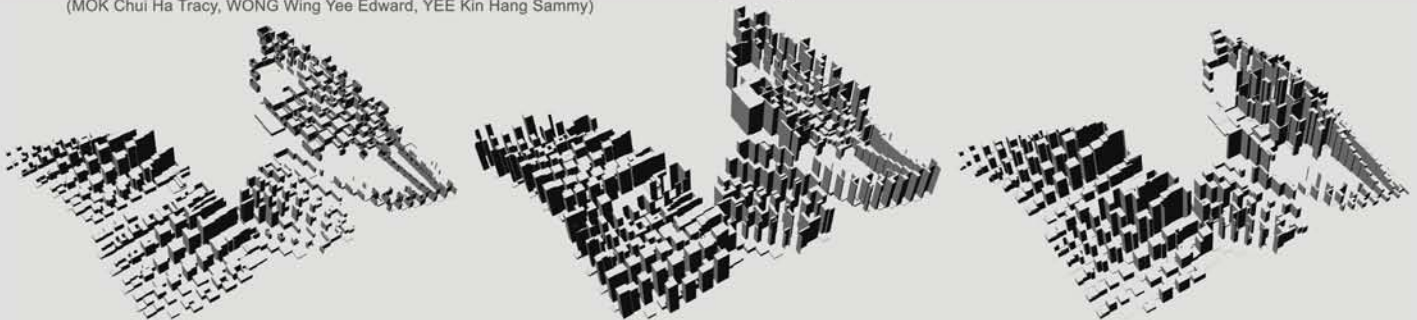
Masterplan indicating different degrees of deep space and spatial character, (GAO Jinghang Ryan, GUO Jia Jeff, LO Yee Cheung Adrian)



Analysis of continuous deep spaces of the Venetian, Galaxy and City of Dreams Casinos, in relation to the proposed scheme (LO Yee Cheung Adrian)



Massing diagrams generated with Grasshopper, indicating differential outcomes of masterplanning processes Cotai, (MOK Chui Ha Tracy, WONG Wing Yee Edward, YEE Kin Hang Sammy)



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