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The Viet-street by Ginkgo

11/2/2018

Architect's Statement for the The Viet-street by Ginkgo at Yau Ma Tei, Hong Kong



The Ginkgo House new flagship restaurant is a community project. Ginkgo House is a restaurant chain that provide employment for the elders. We have attempted to retain the existing weathered and aged interior spatial quality to echo the unique business nature of this social enterprise which was set up out of the love for the elders.

For those of you who are not familiar with Hong Kong, Temple Street was, and still is, one of the cities red-light districts mainly visited by aged local men and currently, Temple Street is now dazzling with tourism.

The Ginkgo restaurant, which is a social enterprise, is ironically situated above a "Mahjong School". The Kwok's family - the landlord of the Ginkgo House - ran a chain of "Mahjong Schools"(a.k.a. Mahjong parlors) in Hong Kong and his flagship outlet is situated on the ground floor of a sixty years old building called the Alhambra Building (平安大廈) in Kowloon, Yau Ma Tei, near Temple Street. The Kwok's family also owns other units within the same building.

Running Mahjong school is a tough and hardening business, because they are essential bookmakers.

Ginkgo House is not an ordinary restaurant, but the first social enterprise in Hong Kong to promote employment of the elderly. As a social enterprise, Ginkgo House aims to provide employment opportunities for elders who have financial or emotional needs, so that they can regain selfconfidence and affirm themselves.

Since its establishment in 2003, Gingko House has employed for more than 3,000 elderly.

In 2016, The Gingko lost their lease of their main restaurant and they were desperate to find a new space. Hong Kong is rated as one of the most expensive city to live in the world and it has the highest real-estate prices, opening a new restaurant in Hong Kong is difficult.

Jeffrey is in the advertising industry and he was the founder of a local advertising company, PMM Media, which promotes social enterprises. Perhaps it was through his media network that Jeffrey had learned the difficulties that Gingko House (銀杏館) was facing. Jeffrey had persuaded his father to lease out one of their units within the Alhambra Building for Gingko House, which has a net floor area of 300 square meters.

Not only did Mr. Kwok senior agreed to rent out a unit with a net floor area of 300 square meters., he only asked for one-eighth of the market rate as rent, hoping that the low rent would aid Gingko House's business and facilitate their social causes.

The Gingko had chosen us for the work not only because of our past successful restaurant design cases, but perhaps for our philosophy and humanistic approach towards architecture.

We have built several successful restaurant chains in Hong Kong and China and we have been experimenting with the thematic of Hong Kong's colour and nostalgia for the past years.

This is a Vietnamese restaurant, and as there are no windows we have full control of the lighting. We thought to create an environment where the visitors may felt that they were trapped in the Saigon back in the 1960s.

Yours sincerely,



Manfred Yuen

Principal Director,

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PROJECT SUMMARY \\\

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