

SPECIAL
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HONG KONG

ONE STORY

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THE HINT IS IN THE NAME

Hint, the name of Keith's retail space is a play on the first four letters of Hintegro, his company's name, which is itself an integration of his Chinese name HIN and INTE for interior.

THE PERFECT BALANCE



Atsuro Tayama, Festival Walk, Hong Kong

Keith: A visionary interior designer seamlessly integrating diverse talents. Lecturer, writer, curator of exquisite homewares. Redefining aesthetics, captivating discerning eyes. The epitome of a modern design virtuoso, elevating creativity and business to new heights.

THE MATHEMATICS OF DESIGN



For Keith, design is a thinking and problem-solving process... we think, we draw and we produce prototypes to tackle the problems ... This is just like doing integration in mathematics.

COLLABORATION WITH JAPAN



A commission for a whisky bar in Wanchai brought about Keith's first collaboration with Japan where the prototype of the bar terrace - a traditional Japanese raked sand garden with water and stone elements - was made to test-bed the installation in situ.

INTERVIEW



I was born and raised in Shatin. I take pride in being a 'local boy'. My 'local-ness' gives me a flexible, adaptive perspective.

FROM MINIMALISM TO MAXIMALISM



One design firm that is leading the way in creating stunning and functional living spaces is Hintegro where a range of client briefs from minimalism to maximalism are brought to life.



Gallery 29, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

HONG KONG JAPAN

Opening essay by Lianne Hackett

Hong Kong interior designers come no more focused on the perfection of precision than Keith Chan, founder of Hintegro. Keith is a designer whose detail-focused approach has been honed over many years of study and practice.

Born in the 80s in Hong Kong's Shatin, a new town - founded in the 70s - that also grew up in the 80s, Keith cites the influence that Japanese pop culture had on him during his student days in the early noughties at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. As a PolyU Design student, he was exposed to international design movements, the most impactful, drawing him to Japan.

Squaring circles is a pleasure in life. Keith is a designer who relishes that challenge. A growing awareness that Hintegro was spoken of as a practice that focused on residential projects prompted Keith to expand the practice into hospitality and fashion retail, becoming the first Hong Kong designer to be commissioned by Atsuro Tayama, the Paris-based Japanese designer, who now has three stores in Hong Kong. Keith achieved this given his growing reputation for managing projects in Hong Kong for clients, including from Japan, for whom the heavily regulated Hong Kong planning system needs expert navigation. Keith relishes the synergies of this dual-cultural working practice, citing the pleasure he gains from working alongside celebrated Japanese interior and landscape designers whose appreciation of his untangling the bureaucracy is heartfelt. Residential remains



“Curves give a sinuous flow to a space, signalling a welcome to all who enter in.”



Atsuro Tayama, Festival Walk, Hong Kong



Elegance and sophistication at Atsuro Tayama, Festival Walk, Hong Kong where Hintegro has created a perfect balance of natural materials and modern aesthetics in retail design.

THE PERFECT BALANCE



F&B Design: Hintegro has created a bright and calming café experience for local coffee brand Cupping Room's new shop in Kwun Tong. The café design pays homage to the history of Kwun Tong district and includes Bistro Le Parisien.



Preset / interval coffee bar



Graphite:

Hintegro's design for Graphite furniture store that specialises in wood products evokes perfectly a Japanese sensibility. From beautiful chairs and tables to unique decorative items, all are expertly crafted from the finest woods. This gem of a shop showcases the natural beauty of wood.

centre stage. A commission for a Hong Kong client's home in Los Angeles led to a further commission for the client's home in Hong Lok Yuen. Luxurious simplicity was the brief. From the super-scale of the pivot entrance doorway through to adobe-style hand-crafted stone walls and blue-tiled staircase risers, Keith and his team have achieved this and more.

The curve sees full expression in Gallery 29, the new Wanchai exhibition space where from the capsule-like entrance to smoothly curved gallery walls, the curve is highlighted, the beauty of the form inset-lit. The space is cool, futuristic and serves perfectly the work on show. Another project where curves feature is in the French Bistro, part of the Cupping Room at APM, Kwun Tong. The curve of the bistro bentwood chairs sets off an archway-framed mural that portrays an international gathering of friends – including the designer – in a glorious evocation of the IRL friendships the bistro will surely create.

Keith, a visionary interior designer, collaborated with UNION, the renowned Japanese door handle maker, through Hintegro, a pioneering Hong Kong design practice. Keith witnessed UNION's close collaboration with designers during his visit to Japan in 2019. Keith decided to design his door handle based on his cultural sensibilities and inspiration from this experience. Both Japan and Hong Kong revere bamboo, which represents "good being" and "good behaviour" in Chinese culture. Keith's design brought this symbolic material to life with meticulous craftsmanship. It was a striking display at DesignInspire Hong Kong 2021, combining cultural symbolism with artistic excellence, leaving attendees spellbound.

A recent project was for a whisky bar in Wanchai for a couple whose heritage combines India and Japan. The bar leads out on to a large terrace that has been landscaped as a traditional Japanese raked sand garden with water and stone elements. The Japanese landscape designer was known to Keith who was brought into the project to navigate permissions and - with his team - build the garden. He describes the resulting teamwork as akin to a "bromance" with his team flying to Japan to work on a one-to-one mock-up of the garden. The experience - including sharing onsen - enhanced the experience of his team. Keith cites this unique time as a work/life highlight; one that has enhanced and re-motivated him and his team to take on yet more of the complex, precise projects that is the core of Hintegro.

Keith, an accomplished and versatile individual, embodies the rich tapestry of creative roles established in Japan. It is Keith's visionary talent that extends beyond traditional boundaries as an interior designer. He seamlessly transitions from lecturer to writer to columnist to entrepreneur to purveyor of fine homewares, many of which are sourced from Japan. Keith has strategically positioned his Shatin-based business closer to his clients by establishing Hint in the vibrant neighborhood of Sai Ying Pun on Hong Kong Island. Keith's company name is cleverly reflected in the name "Hint," which symbolizes his belief that design should be accessible and enjoyable for all. As Keith continues to pursue his diverse endeavors, he weaves a captivating narrative that celebrates the essence of design and invites everyone to embark on a creative journey of their own.

The concept for Hintegro took shape through Keith's active involvement in the Hong Kong Trade Development Council's esteemed annual expositions. As a design ambassador for HKTDC, his encounters with skilled designers and makers during his travels in Japan led to a compelling suggestion: the establishment of a physical space to showcase their exceptional work. From

ONE STORY, ONE INTERVIEW

FOR ME, THE MOMENT IS NOW.

When did you found Hintegro?

I have been at the helm of my company for over 11 years.

How did the name come about?

HIN is my Chinese name while INTE means interior and INTEGRAL comes from calculus in mathematics, in other words, integration. To me, design is a thinking and problem-solving process in which we break down the complicated problems into smaller ones. Then we think, we draw and we produce prototypes to tackle the problems. We test the prototypes by trial and error. Finally, we synthesize them into a holistic design. This is just like doing integration in mathematics.

Where did you train?

During my educational journey at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, I was fortunate to immerse myself in a vibrant world of creativity and innovation. As a student of design at PolyU, I had the opportunity to explore various international design movements, broadening my horizons and expanding my design perspective.

How does being a born, raised and trained in Hong Kong designer manifest in your work?

I was born and raised in Shatin. I take pride in being a 'local boy'. I feel that my 'local-ness' gives me a flexible, adaptive outlook. This has helped me to understand the needs of overseas clients who want to take on projects in Hong Kong. I have earned a growing reputation for managing projects in Hong Kong for clients, including from Japan. Overseas clients often find the heavily regulated Hong Kong planning system hard to navigate.

What led to your profound influence from Japan?

During my tenure at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, I was deeply influenced by Japanese pop culture, which left a profound impact on me. Since then, my fascination with Japan and its captivating cultural heritage has only intensified. One aspect that continues to captivate me is the remarkable versatility and multifaceted nature of

individuals in Japan, where professionals excel not only in their primary roles but also in various creative pursuits.

The rich traditions, meticulous craftsmanship, and unique aesthetic sensibilities of Japanese design continue to inspire and shape my creative journey.

You are known for residential design. How did you pivot into hospitality and fashion retail?

I came to realise that clients were aware of our residential expertise, but not that we are a versatile practice that also had much to offer to commercial projects, including in hospitality and retail. The time to pivot was swifter than I imagined. We gave a nudge and received a positive response.

Designers are often known as solo players, but you are known as a team-builder. How does co-working influence your design practice?

Over the years, I have built a great team in my design practice. We work together, sharing ideas and working equitably. A recent experience found us working together in Japan on the mock-up of a sand-raked garden for a client. This gave us time to get to know each other really well – we even took onsen together. I have described the deep respect that has grown between us as colleagues as a bromance – without the romance, of course!

You also opened a retail space, which you named 'Hint'. How did this come about?

The idea came out of my becoming a design ambassador for HKTDC. Designers and makers I met on my travels in Japan suggested that I open a shop to show their work. The name is a play on the first four letters of my company's name. I also wanted to send out a clue to my belief that everyone can enjoy design. We found the perfect space in Sai Ying Pun on Hong Kong Island, close to where many of our clients live and work.



Having a retail space led you to design and manufacture products. Is that the case?

Yes. We are proud of our products, including the Red A Stool, which is a play on the Hong Kong market stall stool that everyone – living or visiting Hong Kong - knows well. It is a simple, iconic piece of vernacular Hong Kong furniture that is part of our past and present. We wanted to celebrate the stool and elevate it to a design piece. Hint also enables us to offer design seminars. We are having a lot of what I would call serious fun at Hint.

What does the future hold for Hintegro?

We are exploring our first hotel commission. I am excited about the future for the practice and our retail space. Both point in the direction of Japan. I feel a real affinity for the country, its food rituals, arts culture and design sensibility.

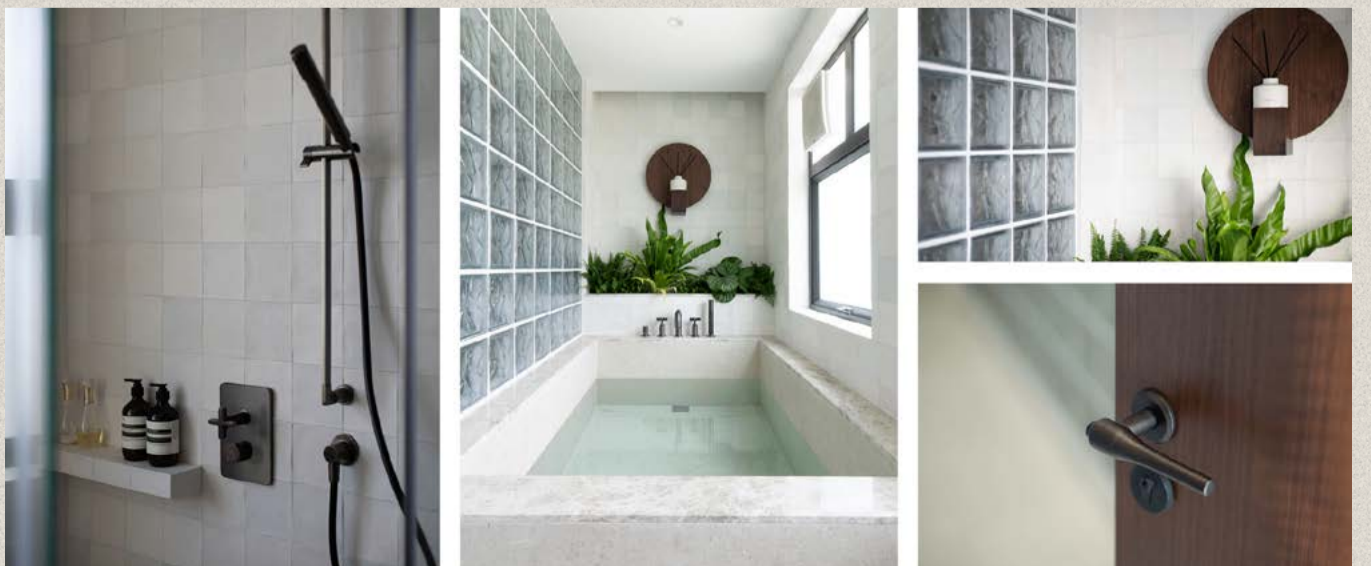
this idea, Hint emerged as a dynamic platform that not only enables Keith to design and manufacture innovative products but also fosters knowledge sharing and creativity through design seminars. This venture seamlessly merges Keith's deep passion for design with his unwavering commitment to nurturing emerging talent within the industry, creating a vibrant ecosystem that celebrates and promotes creativity. In passing on his knowledge and that of his team, the format is open house with a simple registration process. There is an '80s history here: Le Cadre Gallery. when in its Causeway Bay gallery space, offered design seminars and vernissages where young designers met international design stars such as Andrée Putman and Bořek Šípek.

Keith is now actively exploring the practice's first hotel commission with developers and hotel groups. Hintegro's expertise in residential design makes this an ideal next step, given the importance of the 'residential element of the hotel bedroom' to any successful hotel project. A Keith Chan-designed hotel would be a dream; a true integration of precision home making and hospitality. The Hint is out!



Hintegro is the first Hong Kong design practice to work with UNION.

“ In my ongoing creative journey, I am inspired by the boundless possibilities that Japan offers, where individuals can explore diverse fields and embrace endless creative passions. ”



FROM MINIMALISM TO MAXIMALISM



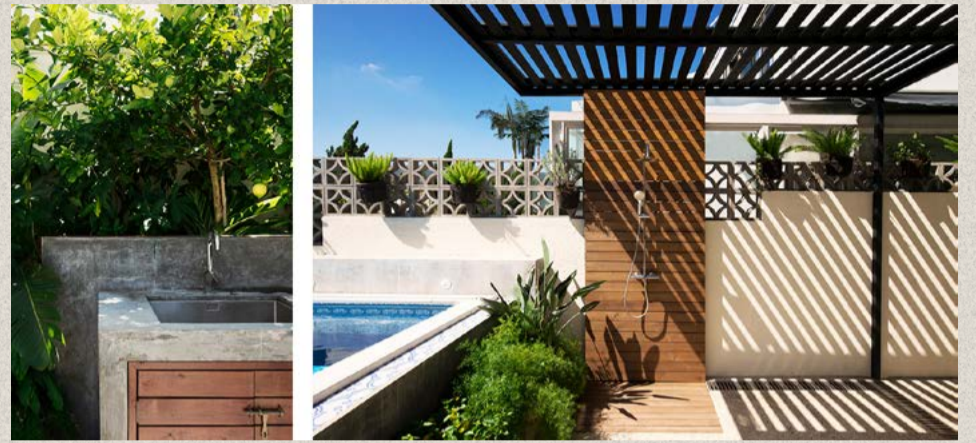
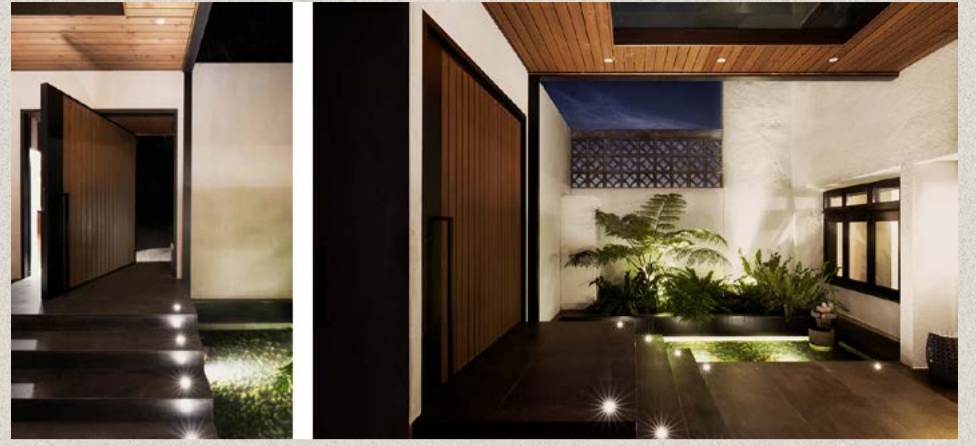
Hong Lok Yuen, Tai Po, Hong Kong

Residential design has taken on a new level of significance in recent years, as homeowners seek to create spaces that are both beautiful and functional. Whether you're drawn to minimalism or maximalism, natural materials or bold colors, there's a trend to suit every taste and every home. And as our lives become more fast-paced and demanding, our homes have become more than just places to live – they're sanctuaries of comfort and relaxation, where we can unwind and recharge.

One design firm that's leading the way in creating stunning and functional living spaces is Hintegro. Based in Hong Kong, with projects spanning across Japan and L.A., Hintegro is known for their passion for quality, attention to detail, and commitment to sustainable design. Their designs are tailored to each client's unique needs and preferences, creating spaces that are both beautiful and functional. With a focus on natural materials and sustainable design, Hintegro's designs are not only aesthetically pleasing but also environmentally responsible.

At the heart of Hintegro's designs is a dedication to the client's vision. Their team of experts works closely with each client to understand their needs and preferences, creating spaces that truly reflect their personality and style. Whether you're looking for a sleek and modern space or a cozy and inviting home, Hintegro has the expertise and creativity to bring your vision to life. From concept to completion, their team is with you every step of the way, ensuring that every detail is carefully crafted to create a space that is both beautiful and functional.

With their finger on the pulse of the latest design trends and a commitment to creating spaces that are as environmentally responsible as they are beautiful, Hintegro is redefining what it means to live in style. Whether you're in Hong Kong, Japan, or L.A., their team of experts can help you create a space that is truly your own – a sanctuary of comfort and relaxation that reflects your unique style and personality.



Tregunter Tower, Mid-Levels, Hong Kong



Albron Court, Central, Hong Kong



Kenville Building, Mid-Levels, Hong Kong



Hong Lok Yuen, Tai Po, Hong Kong

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