Biographical Notes

Alfred Wong Hong Kwok (4 Jan 1930 -) – Architect

Born in Hong Kong in 1930, Wong was one of six children of Wong Peng Shing and Violet Woo. On his father's side, Wong is a great grandson of Chinese businessman Wong Ah Fook.[1] Wong's father was a businessman. His mother managed the family company, Wing Seng Co Ltd, after his father's death in 1952, and was an active member of the Chinese Women's Association.[2]

Wong completed his Senior Cambridge examinations at St Anthony's Boys' School in Singapore after which he enrolled in the University of Hong Kong to study civil engineering. After slightly less than a year, he decided to transfer to the University of Melbourne to study architecture.[3] In Melbourne, Wong met Australian-born Chinese Joyce O'Hoy and they were married in Singapore in 1953.[4] The couple had four children.[5]

After graduation, Wong joined Swan & Maclaren, one of the major architectural firms in Singapore at the time.[6] In 1957, Wong left Swan & Maclaren to start his own firm, Alfred Wong Partnership.[7] Wong's brother, Edward, joined the firm in 1961 after graduating from Liverpool University.[8]

One of Wong's first major projects was the National Theatre, an icon of self-governing Singapore. In 1960, Wong, along with other local architecture firms, was invited to submit designs for a limited competition for the Theatre.[9] Wong's design ultimately won the competition. As Wong's original design was too expensive and complicated to build, the design was modified with the addition of a cantilevered roof. The theatre was eventually completed in 1964.[10]

Subsequently, Wong was involved in designing various religious, educational and commercial buildings. He has been credited for introducing a modernist approach to architecture in Singapore.[11] Wong's first church commission was for the Church of St Francis Xavier in Serangoon Gardens.[12] Other church buildings he worked on include the Church of Bernadette in Zion Road and the Church of our Lady of Perpetual Succor in Siglap.[13]

In terms of schools, Wong designed the Singapore Polytechnic at Dover Road and St Joseph's Institution campus at Malcolm Road.[14] Wong's first major commercial project was that of the Hotel

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[1] CWA book, pp. 59-60; Wong, Alfred Hong Kwok, *Life in an accidental nation*, Singapore: Select Publishing (2016) p.24.

[2] Wong, *Life in an accidental nation*, p. 9.

[3] Wong, *Life in an accidental nation,* pp. 25-26. "Two Malayan students study architecture", *Malaya Tribune*, 9 August 1948.

[4] "Then Joyce met that boy from Singapore", *The Straits Times*, 15 June 1953; "Miss O'Hoy is now Mrs Wong", *The Straits Times*, 7 July 1953.

[5] "A preference for simple elegance", *The Straits Times*, 27 February 1983.

[6] Wong, *Life in an accidental nation*, p. 83.

[7] Wong, *Life in an accidental nation*, p. 90.

[8] Wong, *Life in an accidental nation,* p. 91.

[9] Wong, *Life in an accidental nation,* pp. 33-34.

[10] Wong, *Life in an accidental nation,* pp. 45; "National theatre a success: Raja", *The Straits Times*, 16 May 1964.

[11] Wong, *Life in an accidental nation,* p. 187*.*

[12] Wong, *Life in an accidental nation,* p. 104.

[13] Wong, *Life in an accidental nation,* pp. 106-107, 110-111; "First gold medal recipient: Alfred Wong 1998", *Singapore Institute of Architects website*, retrieved from https://sia.org.sg/awards/sia-gold-medalists/alfred-wong/

[14] "Five years of work led to the new campus", *The Straits Times*, 7 July 1979; Wong, *Life in an accidental nation,* pp.120-125.

Malaysia, later renamed Marco Polo hotel. Wong won two outstanding design awards from the Singapore Institute of Architects for Singapore Polytechnic and the Marco Polo Hotel in 1983.[15]

Wong's other significant projects included designs for Furama Hotel (1979-85), Garden Hotel (1980-4), Ming Court Hotel in Kuala Lumpur (1981-2), UOB Office building and service apartments in Xiamen, China (1993-4), Keppel Distripark (1993-5), Singapore Tourist Promotion Board headquarters (1996) and Merchant Court Hotel (1997).[16]

Wong was a founding member of the Singapore Institute of Architects (SIA) and served as President from 1962 to 1966. He was an advocate for architectural education serving on the Singapore Polytechnic's Board of Governors from 1966 to 1969, and pushing for architectural training to be transferred to the university. He chaired the Board of Architectural Education and established the terms of reference and criteria for recognition of the subsequent School of Architecture at the National University of Singapore. [17]

From 2003 to 2009, Wong served as chairman of the Preservation of Monuments Board.[18]

In 1998, the Wong became the first recipient of the SIA Gold Medal for his role in the development of architecture in Singapore. In 2015, Wong was presented with the Singapore Design Golden Jubilee Award.[19]

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[15] "HDB's super seven", *The Straits Times*, 22 February 1983.

[16] Wong, *Life in an accidental nation,* pp. 191-2.

[17] "First gold medal recipient: Alfred Wong 1998", *Singapore Institute of Architects website*, retrieved from https://sia.org.sg/awards/sia-gold-medalists/alfred-wong/

[18] Koh, Tommy (Ed.), *Singapore: the encyclopedia*, Singapore: Editions Didier Millet with the National Heritage Board (2006), p. 590.

[19] Seow, Janice. "Architect in profile: Alfred Wong", *Indesignlive website* (29 October 2015), retrieved from https://www.indesignlive.sg/people/architect-in-profile-alfred-wong