

Creative constructions

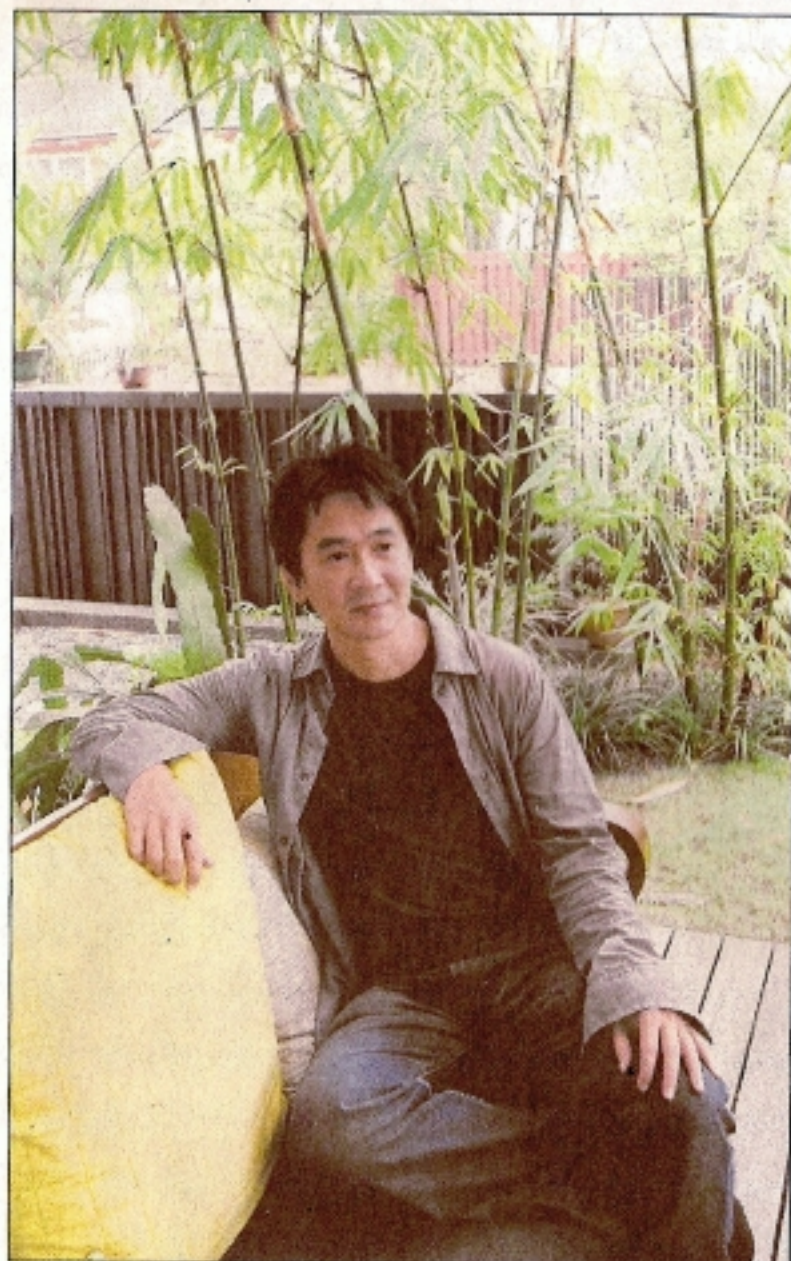


PHOTO: LIM SIN THAI



4 **Yip Yuen Hong, 47 (left)**
Principal architect of Ip:Li Design.
He graduated from NUS

Years of practice: 18

Recent award: SIA Architectural Design Award 2006, for a house at Sunset Place

His take on local architecture: Local architecture tends to look alike. For example, houses here look sleek, rich and uninteresting. We are still not daring enough to be ourselves.

Rather than depend on others to say what is good taste, home-owners should decide for themselves the look they want for their homes, rather than copying trends or their neighbours.

Generally, there has been improvement in some aspects of local architecture over the last two decades. The quality of materials used has improved. But whether or not local architects have made improvements in designing buildings that reflect our culture, climate and context is still questionable.

His style of architecture: Hopefully timeless, subtle, understated, simple yet lifting.

Architecture became a high-profile venture last year, with controversial design proposals and numerous design awards. Life! picks 10 Singapore architects likely to change the landscape this year



Tay Suan Chiang
DESIGN REPORTER

ARCHITECTURE was a hot topic in 2006, with the two upcoming Integrated Resorts (IR) in Marina Bay and Sentosa fuelling public interest in design.

For the record, Las Vegas Sands won the bid for the Marina IR while Genting International won the Sentosa site. Their resorts, designed by Canadian architect Moshe Safdie and American architect Michael Graves respectively, are expected to be ready by 2009 and 2010 respectively.

Mr John Ting, 52, the immediate past president of the Singapore Institute of Architects (SIA), notes: "The design proposals for the IRs captured people's imagination."

This was especially evident in the feedback for Frank Gehry's proposal for the Sentosa IR, which did not win the bid. The American architect's design of a 90m-tall twisted steel-and-glass structure resembling sails divided the public, with some loving its boldness and others decrying its incomprehensible structure.

Veteran architect Tang Guan Bee, 63, says 2006 will also be remembered as a year of awards.

The SIA held its 8th Architectural Design Awards, recognising work by local architects. The SIA-Getz Architecture Prize for Emergent Architecture was also launched. Getz is a building material supply and service provider. The award will be given biennially to an architect who contributes to new directions in Asian architecture.

In November, architects once again came into the spotlight with the inaugural President's Design Award. It is the nation's highest honour for designers and will be given annually to the finest Singaporean talent, products and projects.

Mr Ting says that unlike fashion, which changes each season, architecture takes a longer time for fruition as buildings take more time to be completed.

He and Mr Tang note that 2006 was a year in which architects were mostly involved with small residential projects and design proposals.

"But with the property boom and the IRs, these are signs that the tide is changing and there will be more work for architects," says Mr Ting.

So, who are the biggest names in Singapore's architecture scene now?

Life! Design enlisted the help of the SIA to come up with 10 architects to watch out for in 2007.

The SIA, which has more than 1,000 members, is the national organisation representing architects here. The 10 professionals featured on our list are all award-winning architects.

SIA president Rita Soh says the works of all 10 "show that Singapore architects have come of age and can compete in the international arena".

Still, speak to architects and a common grouse is that when it comes to big projects, there is still a bias among developers for foreign architects. Mr Ting says that it takes time to convince clients that local architects are just as good.

But things seem to be changing, as "we have local architects working together with foreign ones, so that is a start", he says.

For example, local firm DP Architects is working with Michael Graves on the Sentosa IR. It also worked with Japanese architect Toyo Ito on the \$290-million VivoCity shopping mall and with British firm Michael Wilford & Partners on the Esplanade project.

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*BRICKTHROUGH: TAY SUAN CHIANG PROFILES 10 ARCHITECTS WHO ARE LIKELY TO BE SUCCESS STORIES THIS YEAR