

GREEN VISIONARIES

In an urban setting awash with slate, steel and glass, these landscape architects are softening hard edges with a palette of natural hues.

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Franklin Po believes that design is not static: "People come in and move and change things, it's something we have to accept."

LIVING DESIGN
FRANKLIN PO, TIERRA DESIGN

If you ask Po, there's no such thing as sustainable design. "Good design should, in the first place, consider the holistic picture - environment, ecology, landscape and the users," says the straight-talking principal and chairman of Tierra Design, an award-winning Singapore-based landscape design firm.

"Green architecture is an intrinsic part of design, not just a catchphrase or a trend." A designer is always imposing himself on a landscape, he says, but the idea is to "find order and spatial quality" by blurring the line between landscape and built form.

Take, for instance, the Marina Barrage. Consulted on the project, Po was asked to design a way to "hide" the building with plants. "I told the developer: 'Why build a building and then try to cover it up? Look around the space. It's a park; there is no

boundary." Po instead "wrapped" the park above and around the pump station, creating terrain that merges and flows freely. "People can move above, through and around the space now. They even fly kites there at night."

With 40 years of experience working in the US and Singapore, Po has done numerous high-profile projects, from the Tom Bradley International Terminal at LAX and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art to the Singapore Supreme Court.

At The Loft at Nassim Hill, built in 2002, Tierra installed one of the first green walls in Singapore and, later, on a much larger scale at Changi Airport's Terminal 3. "In an urban setting, buildings coexist with others, but also with the spaces in between," he said. "So what we do with this space is important."

FIRST PROJECT The enamel steel-clad IBM Pavilion for the Japan Expo in 1970. The 24-year-old UCLA graduate's first foray into exhibit design and architecture saw him draw all the presentations by hand.

SIGNATURE STYLE Tactile, interactive green spaces that are at one with the landscape.

INSPIRATIONS Po draws his from the pure structure of Grecian architecture and cosmetic embellishments of the Romans to Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright.

DREAM PROJECT One that combines all the disciplines of architecture, landscape architecture, interior design and urban planning into one comprehensive design. Po's work on Tseung Kwan O, a mixed-use project in Hong Kong and the ICC in Shanghai have come close, but not quite, he says.

WHAT'S NEXT A few mix-development projects in Shanghai that combine a train station, shopping mall and residences.

WHAT BEST DESCRIBES HIM A passionate dreamer who thinks that anything is possible.