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The Oslo School of Architecture and Design

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Beate Hølmebakk', written in a cursive style.

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Company cooperation:

Title of project:

Hong Kong Vernacular Centre

Hong Kong Vernacular Centre

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INTRODUCTION

Hong Kong was a British colony for 155 years and became a special region after handover to China in 1997. Because of the "Sino-British Joint Declaration" and "One country, two systems" agreement between British and Chinese government, all systems in Hong Kong are remained unchanged for 50 years till 2046. Since handover, the Hong Kong government promotes three spoken languages (Cantonese, English and Mandarin) instead of bilingual in Cantonese and English. With the rapid increase in Chinese immigrants, elementary schools are tend to use mandarin for teaching while the post china political party is also trying to push the change that mandarin should be the main teaching language. In 2014, the government also published an article in which it said "Cantonese is a dialect, but not an officially use language in Hong Kong...", which points to a desire to denigrate Cantonese usage even the Education Bureau made an apology to public after the complaints and the anger of Hongkongers.

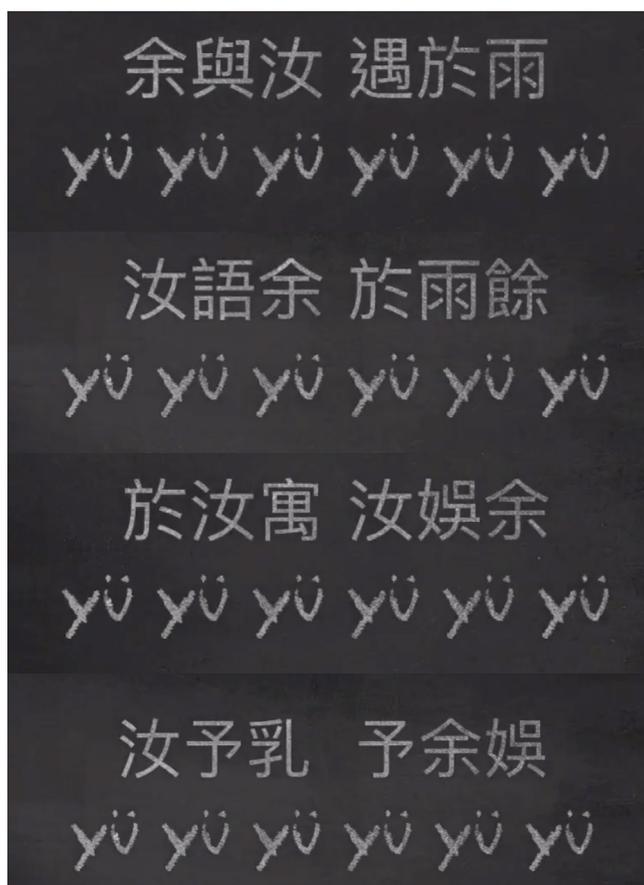
Cantonese has long been the dominant language in Hong Kong and south China. Hong Kong and Macau is now the only region still using Cantonese (spoken language) and Traditional Chinese (written language) as an official language. Hongkongers are worried about when "One country, two systems" expired in 2046, Cantonese and Traditional Chinese are no longer official.



現在說廣東話是犯法嗎？
Is speaking in Cantonese against the law now?

10 years, film, 2015
十年，電影

Every single word in the following story are exactly the same combination to the vowel consonant.
All the word sound exactly the same, only the tone are different.



We met on a rainy day,
and you said to me,
While it's still raining,
Why don't you come around to my place?
I will entertain you.
And then you let me play with your tits.

The decadency of Cantonese is not only affecting the language culture, but also threaten the position of traditional building structure.

Walled villages, Stilt Houses and Bamboo structure are crucially inherited the Hong Kong culture with our language. Those are the witnesses to our history, festivals and folk religious. Hong Kong developed from a fishing village to a trading port and a cosmopolitan, fishermen first built their permanent stilt houses by using bamboo and wood along the sea; suburb residents and farmers built their walled villages for their life safety, education and hall for ancestral altar. Self-standed bamboo pavilions, theatres and stages are widely use for celebrating traditional festivals and local's functions. Folk opera is presented in the extension and temporary bamboo pavilions with the stories and the scripts in praying to the nice weather that beneficial to the fishing and farming industry. Fishermen clusters and walled villages became heritage because of the urbanization; The scale of the traditional festivals is also narrowed down.

With the considerable historical value and regarding Hong Kong's identity, I hope my project could defend the language and the building tradition that preserve my culture in a long way.



Tsang Tai Uk Walled Willage (曾大屋)



Tai O stilt houses village



Bamboo pavilion

“When a language dies,
its words of love,
intonations of pain and caring,
perhaps the old songs,
the old stories, the speeches, the prayers,
no one no matter whom
will be able to repeat them again.”

“When a language dies,
then many have died,
and many more will die soon,
mirrors forever broken,
shadows of voices
forever silenced,
humanity grows poorer
when a language dies.”

-“When a Language Dies”,
by Miguel Leon Portillo
(English translation: John Ross)

當一種語言死亡，
其愛的字詞，
痛苦和關懷的語調，
或許那些老歌，過去的故事，演說，禱告，
儘管是誰，
也沒人能再將其重覆了。

當一種語言死亡，
更多的便會逝去，
隨後的亦會逐漸消失，
鏡子被永遠摧毀，
聲音的影子
永恆靜默，
人性在退步
當一種語言死亡。

WHAT IS VERNACULAR?

1. (usually **the vernacular**) The language or dialect spoken by the ordinary people in a particular country or region.

2. (of architecture) concerned with domestic and functional rather than public or monumental buildings.

- Oxford Dictionary

VERNACULAR IN HK

1. Vernacular (**Language**) :

Cantonese and traditional chinese

2. Vernacular (**Architecture**) :

Walled villages, Stilt Houses and Bamboo pavilion

The project is a centre that revitalize and preserve Hong Kong vernacular culture in both programmatic (language preservation activities) and architectural ways(building materials and method).

THESIS

The project will investigate the relationship between architecture and language, focusing on cultural and architectural value to Hong Kong.

The theme of my project is conservation. I will propose a centre for Cantonese by looking at how the similarity of constructing a word and structures in traditional buildings that can inform the permanent architectural spaces. What does the architectural decisions in using the fundamental tradition to preserve a culture?



Glimpse of Fishermen's Life - Tai O pile shacks, Mak Fung, 1966

漁家掠影 - 大澳棚屋, 麥烽

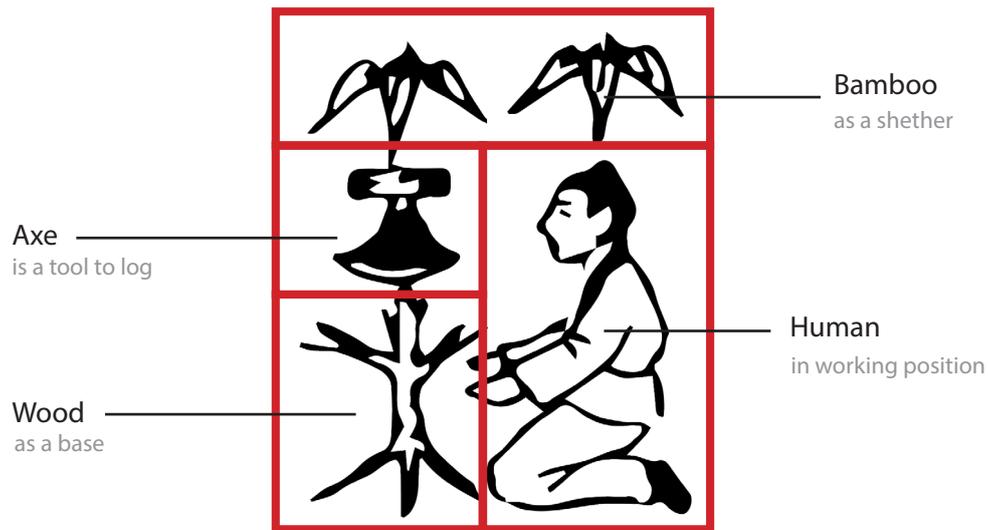
APPROACH

a. Tectonic and Architecture inspirations from Language

This is a study on architecture and language. I wish to explore how the different signs spatially assemble to a word which related to the building structure and materials. By using the inspiration from the language to develop architectural spaces, I wish these words can explain my project in the structural and materials way.

築

Build



Build(Hieroglyphs)

Bronze inscriptions (BC 1600)

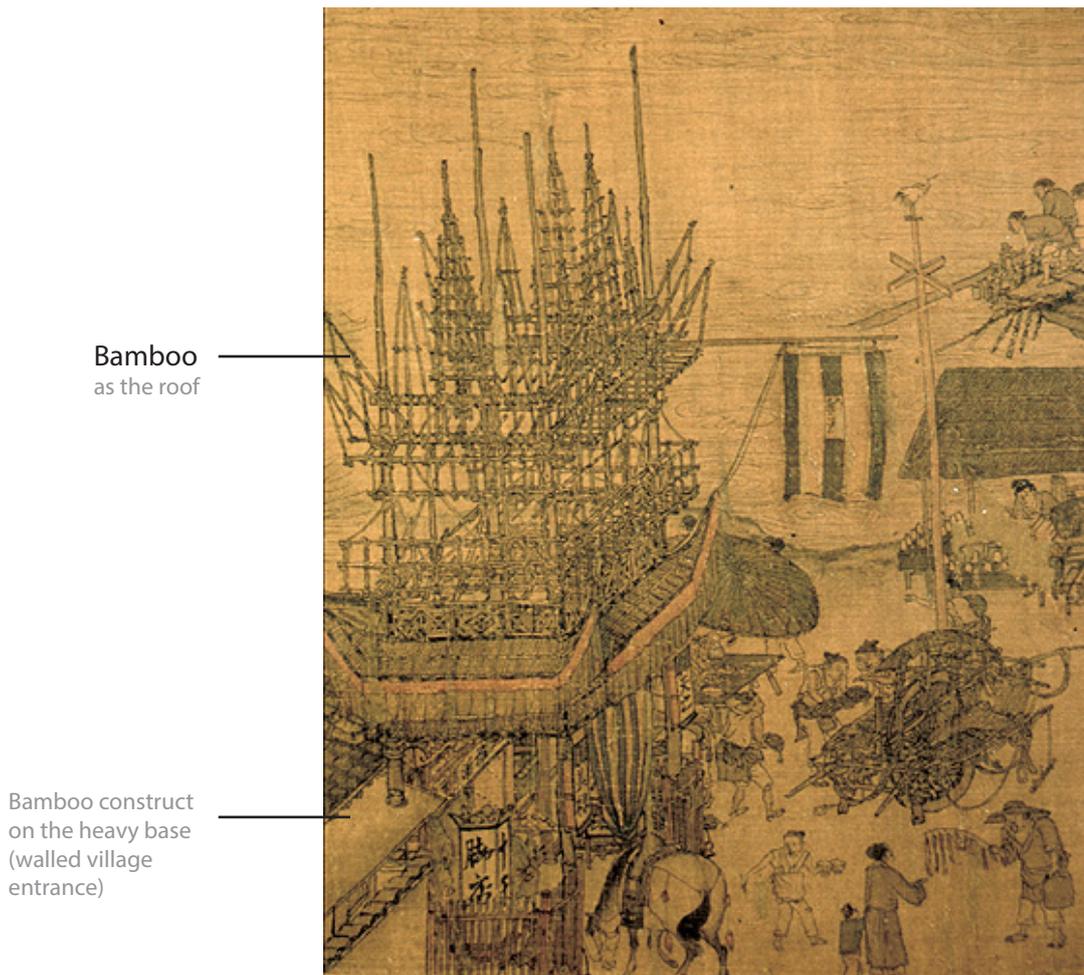
Warring States (BC 453)

Seal script (BC 221)

Clerical script (BC200)

Regular script (AD 25 to Now)

The development of the word "Build, 築" with different form and tools.



Along the River During the Qingming Festival, Zhang Zeduan (1085–1145), Song dynasty

清明上河圖, 北宋畫家張擇端

b. Recall and Revitalize

The program of the centre is recalling the memory of the traditional festivals, performances and folk activities in Cantonese; The materials and the structure in the buildings are recalling the villages living habits and the cultural memory in Hong Kong.

While analysing the construction of written words and architecture by using literatures and drawings. I wish to work on with models to study the spatial qualities in walled village, the structure of stilted house and bamboo structure. The research in language might strengthen the possibility to develop permanent architectures. I do not intend to reproduce the architecture in the old days, I will design new buildings that the cultural value can be revitalized.

c. Conservation

With all those methodologies I mentioned above, I wish my project could propose a typology in architecture with historical value to preserve Cantonese and our cultural that at the same time preserve our language and architecture regarding Hong Kong's identity.

SITE

The site will be located in Nam Sang Wai (南生圍), Yuen Long, Hong Kong with the significant history in developing stilt houses for farming and fishing industry. The area surrounded by numerous traditional walled villages clusters. With the decay of traditional industries, Nam Sang Wai becomes a recreational place nowadays. Hongkongers like to run away from the crowded high-rise city to Nam Sang Wai in the leisure time, therefore, the number of visitors in Nam Sang Wai are increasing.

However, the government is planning to inject lots of commercial activities to Nam Sang Wai including luxury housings and shopping malls for the rich and Chinese visitors as it is easy to access and closes to the border.

I wish my project in Nam Sang Wai could defend Hong Kong and keep its historical and recreational value to HongKongers, it can also become a gateway for Chinese visitors to learn our culture.



PROGRAM

The project is a vernacular centre of cantonese language and building culture with several parts that approximately 1500 m2 covered area.

The village will include the following spaces:

- Administration office
- Information centre
- Auditorium/mini theatre
- Exhibition room/ Activities room
- Library
- Washroom
- Technical room
- Storages
- Restaurant/cafe
- Shelter/pavilion for pier

SUBMITTED MATERIAL

- Model of the buildings
- Model of selected spaces 1:25
- Situation Plan 1:2500
- Plans 1:100
- Sections 1:100
- Details 1:5 / 1:10
- Elevations 1:100
- Logbooks/sketches
- Images

The scales are subjected to change.

SCHEDULE

Week	Content
1-2	Tectonic studies and comparison in Language and Architecture
3-4	Site mapping
5-6	Spatial experiements
7-8	Spatial experiements
9-10	Spatial studies of different zones
11-12	Spatial studies of materials, Light and structure Details consideration
13-14	Relationship of the research ques- tions and architectural program
15-16	Final project and design
17-18	Presentation materials
19-20	Final preparations

REFERENCE PROJECTS



Xiangshan Campus, China Academy of Art, Wang Shu, 2004-2007, Hangzhou, China



Lancaster hanover masque, John Hejduk

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Building houses (造房子)

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Ten Years (十年)

Film, by Ng Ka-leung, Jevons Au, Chow Kwun-Wai, Fei-Pang Wong, Kwok Zune, 2015

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(香港故事-本土 plus+ : 口噏噏 粵語有秘笈) Documentary, by RTHK, 2017

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Rural architecture in Hong Kong (香港鄉村古建築)

James Hayes