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Andrew Bromberg of Aedas  
— Envisioning a New Architecture

专辑：  
安德鲁·布朗伯格、凯达环球  
——新建筑的前景展望

# at

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— Envisioning a New Architecture  
Chinese Edition

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Essay:

# The Design Hand and Mind of Andrew Bromberg

Michael Speaks

论文:

安德鲁·布朗伯格的设计思想与设计手法

迈克尔·斯毕克思

Driven by advances in building and information technology and accelerated by the tumultuous period of global economic restructuring that commenced in 2008, architecture practice is today confronted with the necessity of fundamental change. According to the “Building Futures” group at the Royal Institute of British Architects and US-based “Design Futures Council,” a great deal depends on what happens in China and other emerging markets, where many European and US firms now have offices. And that is not only because these are the most vibrant markets for architecture and design services, but also because the demands placed on practitioners in these markets are fundamentally changing the way architecture is designed and delivered, at home and abroad. Both studies suggest that all sectors of the Architecture, Engineering and Construction (AEC) industry will face increasingly fierce competition that will, of necessity, force practices large and small to compete less on cost and more on value. In the very near future, architecture will be valued almost entirely based on performance – economic, cultural, environmental. Technologies like building information modeling and integrated product delivery will enable all firms, even those competing solely on the basis of cost, to design better buildings and deliver them more efficiently. But in such a fiercely competitive global marketplace, efficiency alone will not be enough to guarantee market viability. The real differentiator will instead be design, for design is one of the most powerful engines of innovation and therefore among the most productive forces of economic value creation.

That design adds economic value has been little disputed since the economic “Bilbao effect” created by Frank O. Gehry’s stunning Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, which opened in 1997. The museum, it has been argued, helped transform the failing industrial economy of the city of Bilbao and the entire Basque region into a thriving postindustrial economy based on cultural tourism. Its success created an almost insatiable global appetite for brand architecture, especially in emerging economies – the UAE and China in particular – where so called “starchitects” like Jean Nouvel, Zaha Hadid, Rem Koolhaas and Norman Foster, were sought to design buildings and sometimes entire cities. Demand was driven by the economic, cultural and environmental value that these and other brand names brought to Abu Dhabi, Guangzhou, Beijing and Masdar City. The economic afterglow created by the “Bilbao effect” burned brightly for nearly two decades, culminating with the spectacular display of “starchitecture” at the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics. Shortly thereafter, the world began to feel the initial effects of the recent economic downturn, which prompted many architecture critics in Europe and the USA to conjecture about the end of “starchitecture.” As it turns out, that view was both

premature and provincial; for developing markets in Asia have been remarkably resilient and have continued to support major projects designed by an expanding field of architecture brand names including UN Studio, Asymptote and MVRDV, to mention only a few.

Indeed, what European and USA critics were watching on their television sets and computers during the broadcast of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics was not the end of “starchitecture.” It was instead the beginning of a period of global economic restructuring in which the most ambitious, formally innovative, performance based architecture would announce the dramatic shift of economic power and development activity from Europe and the USA to Asia, Russia, the UAE and other developing markets. Though they could see on their screens the new office and residential towers, sport facilities, and sparkling new infrastructure, these critics did not comprehend what it all meant because they could only see what was occurring in China as an extension of what had already occurred in Europe and the USA. What they and many others were incapable of comprehending was that the world was not flat, as Thomas Friedman had so famously pronounced in *The World is Flat* (2005), his account of how globalization was recreating the world in the image of the west, flattening city, regional and national economic differences into uniform American sameness. From Europe and America they could not see that the world economy was then, as it had always been, developing unevenly, in different places, at different times, and at different speeds, placing different demands on all who live and work there. Rather than yet another stage of western modernization, 2008 marked instead the onset of a distinctly new expression of global modernization driven by an unprecedented demand for quantity and the desire for speed.

Had anyone watching the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics on television or computer screen looked carefully, they might have caught a glimpse of North Star Mixed-use Development, a smart pair of 100 m commercial and retail towers, and among the first completed buildings designed by Andrew Bromberg, one of the most talented architects to have found his design stride on this new speed and quantity driven frontier of global modernization. Trained in the USA, Bromberg began work just more than 10 years ago in the Hong Kong office of global architecture giant Aedas. Bromberg was hired specifically to elevate the design profile at Aedas, and was given the opportunity to work with clients and in contexts mostly of his own choosing. This rather prescient decision by Keith Griffiths, Chairman of Hong Kong office, has resulted in the creation of the prototypical architecture practice of the future: extremely talented, committed design talent guided by a brilliant, charismatic



当今建筑技术和信息科技不断发展进步,建筑设计实践的根本性转变势在必行。自2008年起,全球经济结构剧烈重整,更加速了设计领域的革新变化。英国皇家建筑师学会(RIBA)“建设未来学会”和美国“设计未来协会”根据他们所发布的研究报告,声称未来的世界形势将在很大程度上取决于中国和其他新兴经济地区的发展状况。目前,许多欧美设计企业已纷纷进驻上述地区。原因有二:一是因为新兴经济地区的建筑项目数量最多,设计实践最为活跃;二是因为这些地区建筑行业的本土特色正从根本上影响和改变着本国及境外的建筑设计和建设方式。上述两项研究都表明,建筑、技术和施工领域内的竞争日趋激烈,建筑师事务所无论规模大小,都势必会将工作重点从降低成本转移到提升品质上来。不久以后,建筑品质基本上将以经济、文化和环境方面的性能指标进行评估。新兴科技不断涌现,例如建筑信息模型(BIM)和集成化生产技术(IPD),所有企业都将如虎添翼,更有能力胜任建筑设计和高效完成建造施工,即使是那些以低廉成本为优势的公司也不例外。但是,当今的全球市场竞争极其激烈,仅凭“效率”这一项优势不足以保证建筑企业的市场竞争力。真正能够拉开差距的是设计水平。设计是最有力的创新推手,也是创造经济效益最强劲的动力之一。

1997年,弗兰克·盖里设计的毕尔巴鄂古根海姆博物馆开业,引发了“毕尔巴鄂效应”。自此,“设计催生经济价值”之说已无可争议。人们认为,该建筑推动了毕尔巴鄂工业城及整个巴斯克地区的转型,使之走出衰败的工业经济的阴影,转而以文化旅游为基础,发展形成欣欣向荣的后工业经济模式。该项目成功后,全球范围内掀起了追求品牌建筑的热潮,至今高涨不息。尤其在以阿联酋和中国为首的新兴经济地区,建筑设计及城市规划项目众多,对诸如让·努维尔、扎哈·哈迪德、库哈斯和诺曼·福斯特等“明星建筑师”更是求贤若渴、趋之若鹜。追逐品牌建筑的现象背后,其根由在于名师的光环能为阿布扎比、广州、北京和马斯达尔这样的城市带来经济、文化和城市环境层面的增值效应。近20年来,“毕尔巴鄂效应”长盛不衰;2008年北京夏季奥运会时,一批辉煌壮观的明星建筑闪亮登场,“毕尔巴鄂效应”至此登峰造极。此后不久,全球经济开始出现衰退的征兆,许多欧美建筑评论家纷纷预言明星建筑已面临穷途末路。然而事实证明,持该种观点的人士视野狭隘,下此断言为时过早。亚洲各发展中国家的建筑市场坚实稳健,由知名建筑师事务所(例如UN工作室、渐近线和MVRDV)主持设计的重大项目持续上马。

的确,欧美建筑评论家从电视和电脑上观看到的2008年北京夏季奥运会并非明星建筑的尾声。相反,这是全球经济结构重整的开

端。一批雄心勃勃、标新立异和追求性能品质的建筑拔地而起,标志着经济发展重心的骤然转移,从欧美进入了亚洲、俄罗斯、阿联酋及其他发展中国家。从电视屏幕上,评论家们只看见一幢幢高楼林立,有办公楼、公寓大厦、体育场所,还有全新投入使用的基础设施;然而,他们并未参透个中意味,他们总误以为中国的现状不过是欧美历史的翻版和延续。他们和其他许多人一样,不明白世界其实并不平坦——托马斯·弗里德曼著有《世界是平的》(2005年)一书,名噪一时,他在书中郑重宣告全球化时代的来临。弗里德曼畅想了全球化趋势将以西方理念重塑世界,抹平各个城市、地区和国家经济差异,最终形成雷同的美国模式。但是,这批评论家们身处欧美,无法洞悉世界经济的发展从来不曾均衡过,地域不同、阶段不同、速度不同,对人力资源的需求也不同。2008年并不标志着西方工业化历史阶段的重现,但它正式宣告了新全球化运动的来临。自此,在建筑领域,项目数量空前激增,设计施工进展神速。

2008年北京奥运会期间,人们在看电视或电脑时若是稍加注意,很有可能会在屏幕上瞥见北辰商住大厦。这组塔楼为商住两用,楼高百米,形体灵巧,出自安德鲁·布朗伯格之手,是他最早设计完成的项目之一。安德鲁·布朗伯格才华横溢,在这场以数量与速度取胜的新全球化运动中奋力争先,凛然跻身于前沿建筑师之列。布朗伯格在美国接受教育,10多年前开始在全球建筑设计业巨头凯达环球的香港办事处工作。凯达环球延聘布朗伯格,旨在提升设计品质。香港办事处总裁基斯·格里菲思颇有先见之明,他大胆放手,容许布朗伯格在大多数情况下自行选择项目。十多年来,成果喜人:在布朗伯格这位才气逼人、魅力四射的设计师执掌之下,在香港办事处700名员工的技术、资金和管理资源扶持之下,以全球几千名员工的力量为依托,凯达环球创造出了一系列原型式的未来建筑作品,其设计精妙绝伦,忠实、准确地达成项目目标。纵观布朗伯格的作品全集,包括本期a+u所刊载的项目,我们不难发现,他对设计的热忱与忠诚是成功的最大动因。每当布朗伯格施展身手,一如在西九龙总站项目(2009—2015年,本期a+u,20页)设计过程中表现出来的那样,他天才的设计手法便无可辩驳地绽放异彩。过去十年间,布朗伯格带队参与了不少项目竞标,现实对数量和速度的要求一次次磨砺了他的设计头脑,使之日见敏锐。入主凯达环球不久,布朗伯格率领团队进军中国,他们在设计竞标中时有胜出,但无法推进项目。例如,在西安市的某个总体规划项目竞标过程中,凯达的方案在形态上丰美动人、生机勃勃,令当地官员初见惊艳。然而,最终项目却并未花落凯达。后来,经历了西安紫薇购物中心(2003年)等多个高难度项目竞标后,布朗伯格了解到问题并不出在设计方案本身,失利的症结在于设计团



design hand, supported by the technical, financial, and managerial resources of a 700+ member office in Hong Kong and a global network of thousands. And what drives it all is Bromberg's zeal and singular commitment to design. Any survey of Bromberg's work, including the one in this issue of *a+u*, would attest to this fact. When Bromberg flexes his formal and compositional design muscles, as is so evident in projects like the stunning West Kowloon Terminus (2009–2015, *a+u* current issue, p. 20), there is no denying the brilliance of the design hand.

Shaped by the demand for quantity and speed, Bromberg's design intelligence has been sharpened and refined by the almost incomprehensible number of competition and design projects he has guided over the last 10 years. Soon after his arrival at Aedas, Bromberg began to enter numerous competitions in China. He and his team won on a regular basis, but were unable to advance the projects. The designs, including a beautiful master plan for the city of Xi'an (Yin Xin Development, 2005), were often formally exuberant, which initially proved overwhelming to local officials. He learned, however, that though projects like the Xian Ziwei Mall (2003) were challenging, the design was not the problem. It was, rather, that he often failed to reveal the process and explain the project in detail. When he did so, they began to win with greater regularity as occurred in their very next project, North Star Mixed-use Development (2004–2008) in Beijing. Whereas in China the prototyping exercise of competitions allowed Bromberg to develop a catalogue of invaluable design knowledge, in the UAE, where the market was highly speculative and developer driven, this kind of knowledge was less important than the initial design concept expressed in a sketch or image. After Bromberg decided to enter competitions in the UAE he set out to design a fictional catalogue of towers to include in a competition brochure. Reality, however, outpaced fiction: before Bromberg could begin the catalogue, he entered a competition to design the corporate headquarters for the developer DAMAC in Dubai. He had only three hours to make the initial design and one week to refine and revise it once approved. Even so, he and his team won the competition.

The DAMAC project is emblematic of the time demands placed on almost all of the projects Bromberg and his team design. Designing at speed is not exceptional; it is expected. His team, in fact, seems to delight in the challenges presented by the time constraints placed on all their projects. The pace in Bromberg's studio requires rapid and numerous iterations: experiment, failure, experiment, success, experiment, failure, experiment, success... The failure rate is high, but so too is the rate of learning and knowledge creation, and so, then, the rate of success. Bromberg also

gives his team a great deal of freedom to follow their own design interests within the studio and learn new skills. His team is almost an extension of Bromberg's design intelligence – both his knowledge base and the means by which knowledge is produced, codified, shared and utilized. Bromberg's real genius, however, is his ability to very quickly make designs that retain their integrity while undergoing numerous changes. Rather than develop numerous iterations of a similar design, as is more common, Bromberg instead sketches a single strong design idea that is altered, as required. This approach has proven invaluable in the many fast-tracked projects in the UAE, as was the case in the design of Ocean Heights I (p. 133), a swirling 300 m residential tower completed in Dubai in 2010. After Bromberg won the competition the developer wanted an additional 10 floors and required renderings the next day so that they could begin selling units the following week. "When you do a competition of this kind," Bromberg observed in an interview in 2007, "you better get it right the first time."

Andrew Bromberg has already designed and will build some of the most brilliant new buildings of this century. And he is still very young. There is, then, no denying the design value added by his hand. It is a value that accrues to his clients, to Aedas, and indeed, to contemporary architecture. But what is even more impressive and, indeed, is likely the expression of a new kind of design genius that could only have emerged at this time and in this place, is the design mind of Andrew Bromberg. It is, in fact, what sets him apart, even from the "starchitects" against whom he now matches his hand. Bromberg's early competition experiences in China gave him a way to think designs and indeed buildings as prototypes, where each created new design knowledge that, in turn, helped him to more quickly and more skillfully design the next. Bromberg also thinks designs parametrically, a skill he honed with the many towers he designed in the Emirates. He has an almost preternatural ability to see hundreds of design moves ahead. More recently, especially in the projects he is now designing in Singapore, he seems to have put these two halves of his design mind together. One cannot help but believe that these two ways of thinking design – by prototyping and parametrically – are connected and mutually reinforcing; that Bromberg's constantly changing body of design knowledge enables the speed of thought necessary to see that far ahead while such foresight reciprocally enables the rapid creation of new design knowledge that, in turn, allows for even greater speed of thought. If the demand for quantity and the desire for speed continue, we will be seeing Andrew Bromberg and his team for a very long time to come. The only question remaining to be answered is "how will the others catch up?"



队未能细致入微地展现设计过程，未能详尽地解读项目内涵。于是，他改进了工作方法，着重解读方案。随即，凯达环球便一举赢得了北京北辰商住大厦项目（2004—2008 年）。自此，他们参加设计竞标的胜算倍增。

在中国的竞标经验为布朗伯格积累了各种类型的建筑设计知识与经验；而在阿联酋，由于市场高度投机，项目以开发商意志为导向，所以，初步设计的概念草图或效果图显得更有说服力。布朗伯格进军阿联酋之前，曾着手编制一套虚构的塔楼项目列表，拟作竞标资料。然而，人算不敌天算：项目列表尚未来得及开列，设计团队就已全力投入了 DAMAC 公司的迪拜总部大楼项目。初步设计限时三个小时；一旦中选，再于一周之内进行方案修改和完善。结果，布朗伯格团队大获全胜。

DAMAC 项目对布朗伯格及其团队而言具有标志性意义，它基本上代表了他们全部阿联酋项目的进展速度。快速设计并不意味着异乎寻常和出类拔萃，而是理所当然的家常便饭。事实上，布朗伯格团队似乎乐在其中，他们喜欢限时紧迫的挑战性。他们步履匆匆，循环往复：实验、失败、实验、成功、实验、失败、实验、成功……尽管失误频频，但知识的积累和创新却突飞猛进，故而项目成功率很高。布朗伯格也给予他的团队很大的自由度，任由他们顺应个人兴趣选择分工，自行拓展新技能。布朗伯格团队可被视为他本人设计头脑的扩展和延续——既包括知识基础，也包括生产、处理、共享和运用知识的手段和方法。

布朗伯格真正的过人之处在于他出色的快速设计能力，他能够在不断调整修改方案的同时，妥善保持概念构思的完整性。通常来说，建筑师通常围绕一个中心概念，拓展出多套异曲同工的类似方案。布朗伯格却不然，他总是针对项目任务，拿出一张概念清晰有力的设计草图。他的这种工作方法堪称无价之宝，令其团队在阿联酋参加多项快速设计竞标时大大受益。举例来说，迪拜海天阁公寓一期（133 页）楼高 300 m，外观采用涡流线型，于 2010 年竣工完成。当时，布朗伯格团队在竞标中获胜。但开发商要求建筑额外加高 10 层，并希望设计团队次日提交新的渲染效果图，以便能够用于下周开始的楼盘预售。

“如果你要参加这种竞标，”布朗伯格在 2007 年接受记者采访时，感慨良多，“最好在最开始就做出正确判断。”

安德鲁·布朗伯格已经设计完成了几座本世纪最卓越的新建筑，今后还将取得更多辉煌成果。他仍然年富力强，来日方长。毋庸置疑，

通过布朗伯格之手，设计得到了价值提升且项目方、凯达环球甚至当代建筑领域都从中获益。然而，最令人难忘和备受赞赏的还是安德鲁·布朗伯格的设计思想，堪称全新类型的设计天才和前所未有的时代产物。事实上，卓尔不群的设计思想与设计手法正是他不同于其他

“明星建筑师”的关键所在。一方面，布朗伯格早期在中国参加竞标，身经百战，逐渐培养形成了原型化设计思路，屡有创新；每逢新的项目竞标，过去的知识积累便有了用武之地。另一方面，布朗伯格团队在阿联酋设计了众多塔楼，磨练出善用参数的设计思路。布朗伯格能力非凡、异于常人，他能够监控上百项方案同时向前推进。近年来，尤其是几个新加坡项目的表现，可见他功力精进，已将两种设计思路融会贯通、合二为一了。我们看到，这两种设计思路——原型化和参数化——彼此相通、相得益彰；我们还看到，布朗伯格的设计知识体系持续更新变化，令其自身思维敏捷、理念超前，而遥遥领先的远见卓识又反过来推动创新、加速思维。只要项目数量持续增长，只要设计速度要求高效精准，那么在未来很长一段时间里，我们会一直看见安德鲁·布朗伯格带领着他的团队积极征战在建筑设计的竞技场上。

我们唯一要问的只是“别人将如何追赶他的脚步？”。

（陈霜译）



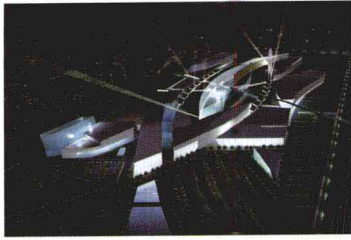
# Selection of Works

2002-February 2011

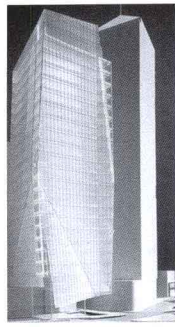
建筑项目精选

2002—2011 年 2 月

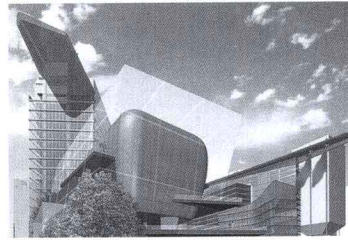




**2002**  
Beijing International Plaza  
Beijing, China



**2002**  
The Landmark Office Tower  
Hong Kong



**2002**  
Tamar Hong Kong's  
Government new HQs  
Hong Kong



**2003**  
Zhongguan International  
Plaza  
Beijing, China



**2003**  
Sichuan Financial HQs  
Chengdu, Sichuan, China



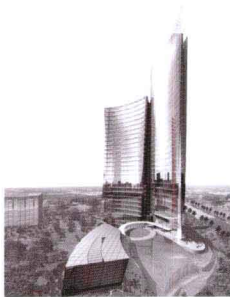
**2003**  
Goldenfield San Lin  
Residential & Commercial  
Development  
Shanghai, China



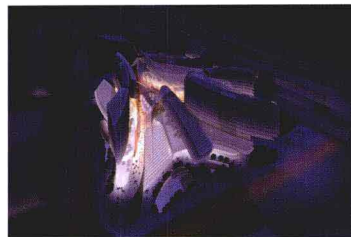
**2003**  
Foshan Media Center  
Foshan, China



**2003**  
Luo Xi Development  
Guangzhou, China



**2004**  
DAMAC HQs  
Dubai, UAE



**2004**  
Union Square  
Dubai, UAE



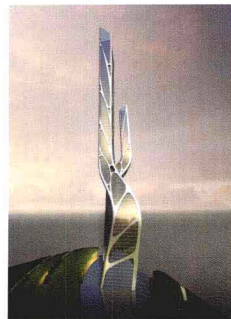
**2004–2005**  
West Kowloon Cultural District  
Kowloon, Hong Kong



**2004–2008**  
North Star Mixed-use  
Development  
Beijing, China



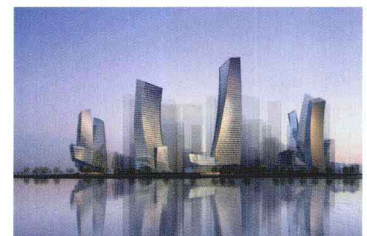
**2004–2010**  
Ocean Heights I  
Dubai Marina, Dubai, UAE



**2005**  
Al Reem Island – Mixed-use  
Development  
Abu Dhabi, UAE

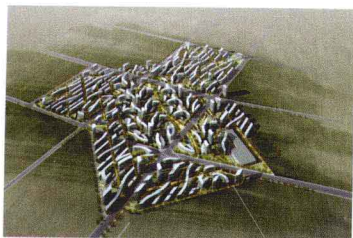


**2005**  
Sheth Headquarters  
Mumbai, India



**2005**  
Sorouh Concept Masterplan  
Abu Dhabi, UAE





**2005**  
Yin Xin Development  
Xi'an, Shaanxi, China



**2005–2006**  
Jebel Hafeet Resort  
Abu Dhabi, UAE



**2005–2008**  
Dancing Towers  
Abu Dhabi, UAE



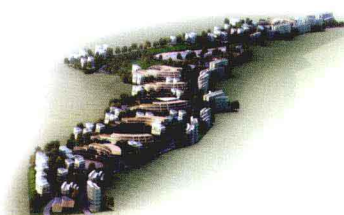
**2006**  
Solidere Development  
Beirut, Lebanon



**2006**  
Atlas Mills  
Mumbai, India



**2006**  
Corporate Towers  
Bangkok, Thailand



**2007**  
Remizovka Masterplan  
Almaty, Kazakhstan



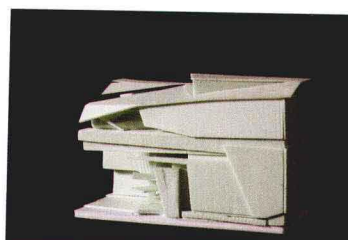
**2007**  
Khor Dubai Wharfage Mixed-  
use Development  
Dubai, UAE



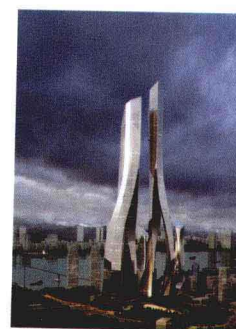
**2007–2012**  
Civic, Cultural & Retail  
Complex  
Buona Vista, Singapore



**2009–2015**  
Express Rail Link, West  
Kowloon Terminus  
Kowloon, Hong Kong



**2010**  
Dance and Music Center  
The Hague, the Netherlands



**2010**  
Chongqing Twin Towers  
Chongqing, China



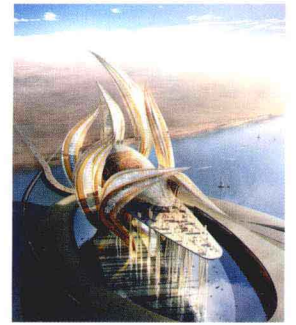
**2005–2010**  
Crowne Plaza Hotel  
Huizhou, China



**2005–2010**  
Boulevard Plaza  
Dubai, UAE



**2006**  
Mixed-use Development of  
New Media  
Dubai, UAE



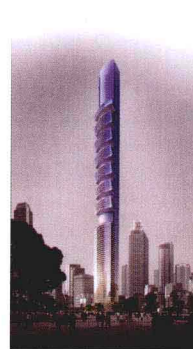
**2006**  
Arabian Performance Venue  
Dubai, UAE



**2006–2011**  
U-Bora Tower  
Dubai, UAE



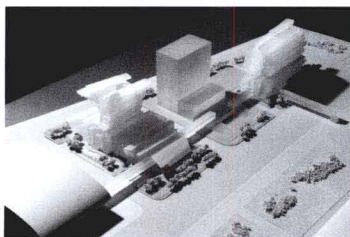
**2006–2012**  
Empire Tower  
Abu Dhabi, UAE



**2006–2013**  
Pentominium  
Dubai Marina, Dubai, UAE



**2006–2014**  
DAMAC Heights  
Dubai, UAE



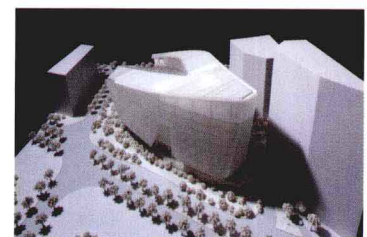
**2007–2013**  
Pazhou Exhibition Complex  
Guangzhou, China



**2008**  
Kutuzovsky Prospekt  
Moscow, Russia



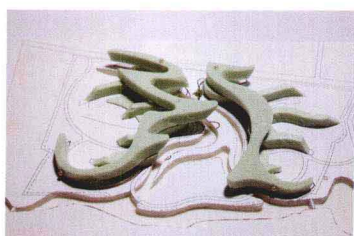
**2009**  
Leningradsky Development  
Moscow, Russia



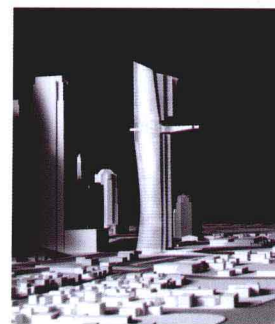
**2009–2013**  
Sandcrawler Building  
Buona Vista, Singapore



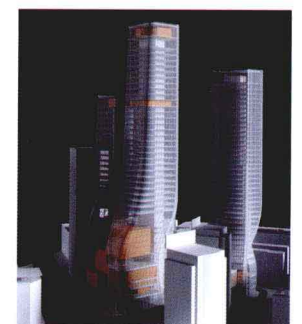
**2010**  
Zendai Bund International  
Finance Center  
Shanghai, China



**2010–2014**  
Sanya Residential  
Development  
Sanya, Hainan, China



**2011**  
Capella Hotel and Residences  
Jakarta, Indonesia



**2011–2015**  
Kunming Cultural  
Development  
Kunming, Yunnan, China



# Andrew Bromberg and Jun Mitsui

## Models of Architectural Practice

访谈：建筑设计实践的模式  
安德鲁·布朗伯格与光井纯

*Architectural practice has been growing extensively all over the world as the societies are growing and changing. Andrew Bromberg discusses with Jun Mitsui, Principal of Jun Mitsui & Associates Inc. Architects and also known as representative of Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects in Japan, about their respective practice within their firms.*

**Jun Mitsui (JM):** I believe we share some similarities as architects in large corporate firms, even though we come from different backgrounds. I studied in America and worked for Cesar Pelli for 10 years. Then I decided to go back to Japan because I felt there were more opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills I acquired in America. I understand that you were born and educated in America. How did you find yourself in Asia?

**Andrew Bromberg (AB):** I first came to Asia to enjoy Asia. I was traveling in Myanmar when I decided that I wanted to live in Asia, in either Hong Kong or Tokyo. The day after I returned to America, a firm contacted me about a possible position in Seattle. When I went to their website I discovered that they had an office in Hong Kong. So I

was back in Asia a month later. Somehow I got here at the right time and then my career started to take off. It was a very quick decision.

**JM:** When did you move to Hong Kong?

**AB:** At the end of 2000, which means it has been over 10 years now. When I began working in Hong Kong, everybody was busy preparing for the Beijing Olympics. Once that was complete, I focused my work in the Middle East designing a number of high-rises in Dubai. My work load started to become more demanding in Asia and I pulled out of Dubai before the recession hit in 2008. I would like to believe that I was savvy, but I have to admit that I have just been lucky.

**JM:** My situation was different because

I started in a recession. When I came back to Japan in 1990, the economy in America was slowing down. For Pelli's office to survive, we had to seek work abroad. Luckily, we won two competitions in Japan. I nevertheless decided to stay, but soon after that the economy in Japan entered a recession.

### Corporate vs. Individual Identity

**JM:** I would like to discuss the issue of individual identity within a corporate environment. I have my own company – Jun Mitsui & Associates Inc. Architects – but at the same time I represent and manage projects for Cesar Pelli in Japan. I have known Cesar Pelli since I was his student at Yale University, and we continue to have a very close relationship. I currently have two staff members working at the New Haven office, and I see them quite regularly. Altogether I have 50 people in my office, which, however, is nothing compared to Aedas. How do you manage as an independent designer within such a large corporate firm?

**AB:** In terms of size, Aedas is the 2nd largest in the world. We have over 700 people in Hong Kong alone. But in spite of that, the size of my team is similar to yours. We have around 45 to 50 people, which is the size I prefer because it allows us to have a very close, family-like relationship. I believe we still face similar issues because there is only so much a corporate firm can do in promoting one person. Aedas must promote all of their offices. Fortunately, I enjoy the types of projects we are working on and we are getting more exposure for the work we do. We benefit from having the resources of a large corporate firm. The teams share their staff, and the overall organization is quite flexible.





**JM:** I think it is important that you find the right balance. For Aedas, it is in their own interest to promote Andrew Bromberg. It gives the company some identity. Otherwise you face the same problems as one of the largest architecture office in the world that has 60,000 people, and yet it has no outstanding designer. Of course, the company has an established name, which works well within the Japanese context, but the fact remains there is no single face to identify with.

**AB:** A few years ago a good friend of mine, Tateo Nakajima, who works for Artec Consultants, encouraged me to build my own individual brand. He had a lot of experience in working with famous architects on theater projects. His point was that clients for civic projects prefer the individual designer over the corporate design firm. It gives the project more familiarity and character.

**JM:** This is an important strategy in the Asian market. Clients prefer to have a face with whom they could associate. Without an outstanding individual, it is

difficult to approach the firm. The interesting thing is that this is not the case in Japan. Clients tend to fear the eccentric designer, thinking they will lose control of the budget and the project. A corporation with strong credentials is more reliable, which is why you have companies with anonymous individuals.

### Working Abroad

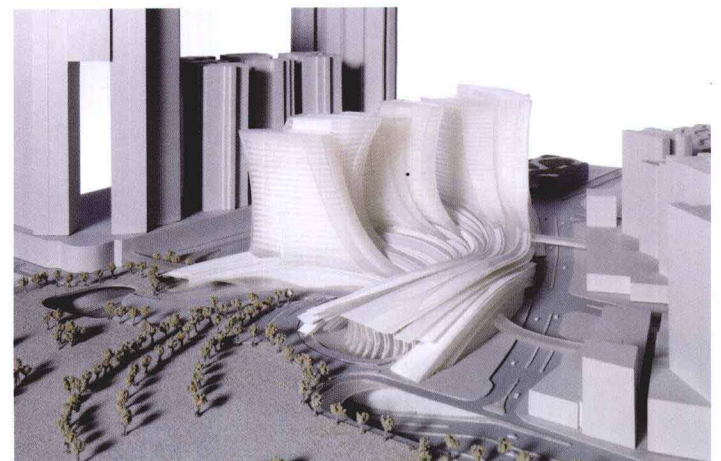
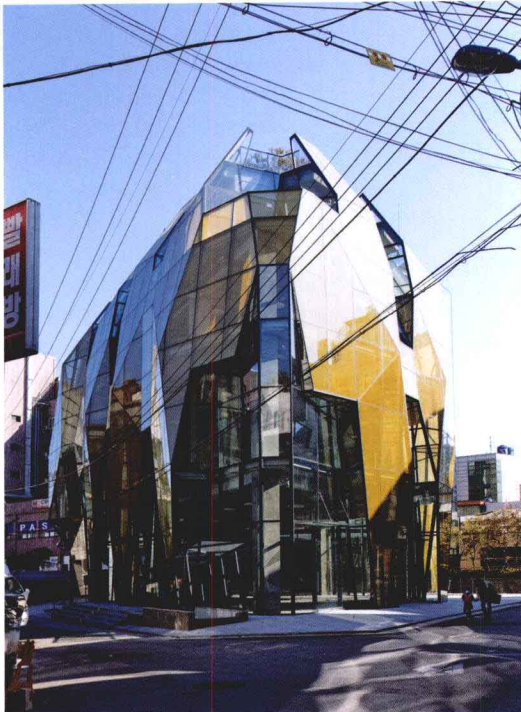
**JM:** I was surprise to see that you have built your status to this point within 10 years. Now you have extensive experience and a strong team to support you. Considering the future of Asian market, where do you see your projects going?

**AB:** Until the economy shifted 2 years ago, I was starting to get excited because I was getting opportunities all over the world. The work was so international that despite having lived in Hong Kong for 10 years I was only working on the West Kowloon Terminus (*a+u* current issue, p. 20). I liked this because the constant exposure to different cultures suits my instincts as a traveler.

Once the global recession set in, I found myself working more vigorously in Asia, especially in China.

What is interesting about China is how much it has changed over the past 5 years. The clients have become much more savvy and appreciative of the design process. It is also encouraging to see emerging Chinese architects. The local design institutes are becoming more sophisticated and promising.

**JM:** I still remember when I was there 10 years ago, China was a difficult place to work in. There was no guarantee of quality and occasionally we did not get paid. But when I started to work there again 3 years ago, I was impressed to find that they could do business at the international level. Still, I see there are cultural differences, which can be frustrating at times. Feng shui plays a prominent role, and their lifestyles and building processes are not the same. There is also the language issue. I have no problems in presenting in English or in Japanese. But when I work with Chinese clients, I worry about how my words are being translated. I do my best to choose simple words and to





control the pace of my presentation. But I feel something is lost.

**AB:** I think it is essential to make your personality come through. While I cannot rely on the translator to convey my sense of humor, I can try maintaining eye contact to ensure that the connection is there. In fact, I sometimes feel that words are overrated. Having said that, I occasionally prefer to have a translator because I am forced to use a few words to build a simple narrative, which is another important way to connect with clients.

**JM:** What do you feel you can bring to a place through your design as a foreign architect?

**AB:** This is a difficult question. You always hope that you can bring something to elevate the human spirit. All my work, including the commercial ones, prioritizes the civic value of the project. Fortunately, I have discovered that civic value generates commercial value, which makes it easier to convince the client. Regardless, I want to try to make the world a better place by giving something to the people. I am now working on a 3000,000 m<sup>2</sup> project in China, Sanya Residential Development (p. 108). At the end of my presentation, the client approached me and gave me a hug in front all the people. It was one of the most special feelings that I ever had. I was shocked at that moment, but I believed it was because we were able to deliver

something that was very special for them within the beautiful site of the project.

**JM:** I agree with you. It pleases me to hear that my clients in Japan are happy with their buildings. I hope this is also the case with my projects abroad. The problem, however, is in controlling the quality of construction. How do you manage this in foreign countries?

**AB:** This is a perpetual struggle. I am never satisfied. Recently we are seeing

whom I am very close to in Singapore and in Dubai. This gives me a lot of comfort and ensures a certain level of quality.

### Design Infrastructure

**JM:** How does the collaboration work between the international offices of Aedas?

**AB:** Generally speaking, each office would have their local projects; however we do collaborate with each other on overseas projects when certain expertise

“

*If you are going to build something that has never been seen before, it is your responsibility as the architect to make sure that the clients can profit from it.*

”

better results in Singapore and even in China. But when I think back at the projects we did in the Middle East, I have to remind myself that we had no time to develop the design. It is all part of our ongoing education.

**JM:** Do you make frequent visits to the construction site?

**AB:** Currently we have 12 projects around the world. If I were to visit each site, I do not think I will have any new projects. In this sense, I am fortunate that Aedas always has local offices. Even though I have 45 people in Hong Kong, there are 10-12 people with

is required or there's a particular design opportunity. Personally, I go back and forth quite freely depending on the level of design the projects or clients require. Financially this could be a little complicated, but we do our best to work to each other's benefit. For instance, with the Civic, Cultural & Retail Complex (CCRC, p. 46), the Singapore office takes 90% of the construction fees and the Hong Kong office takes 90% of the design fees. We have a 10% overlap where they helped us in the beginning and where we will help them in the end.

**JM:** Once you have established the design support infrastructure around the world, then the company can bring in very talented people and make them active immediately. Otherwise it could take years or even decades to establish oneself as an architect. Also, not all architects have strong business instincts. But once the infrastructure is provided for, as in a big company, the designer can focus on what he/she is best at.

**AB:** This infrastructure is especially valuable in Asia, where you do not have the design phases you have in Europe or in America. Still, I rather have fewer projects and do them well. This is why I have a relatively small team. I do not feel comfortable making concept designs for different offices at the same time because I cannot monitor all the

