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The V&A Shekou Project: highlights from 2016

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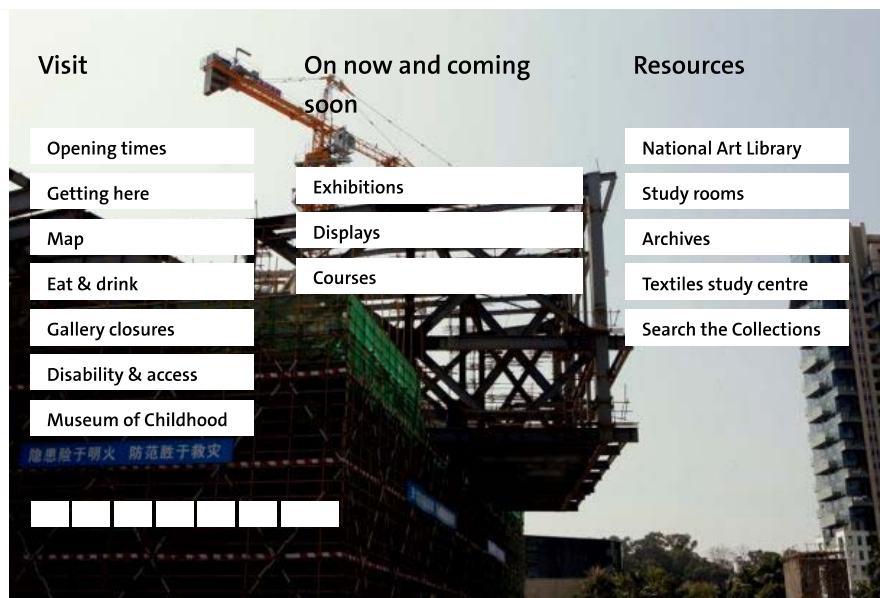
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We're now well into the Year of the Rooster, so it's a good time to look back at 2016 and highlight some key moments of an intense year of preparatory work and joint efforts by both Design Society and V&A teams as part of the collaboration between China Merchants Shekou (CMSK) and the V&A. We have worked very hard to achieve some key milestones in the past year and we are now looking forward to more exciting pre-opening events in 2017, leading up to the official opening of Design Society, and the V&A Gallery, Shekou as one of its main spaces, in October 2017. In addition to our work as V&A Shekou Project team, the 'year in pictures' will include some of the activities that have defined the cultural and creative landscape of the PRD region in 2016.

JANUARY – A 'roof-topping' ceremony celebrating the completion of the highest point of the building designed by Fumihiko Maki and to be operated by Design Society was held on 18 January with the participation of the China Merchants Shekou construction team, all of the contractors, and colleagues from Design Society.

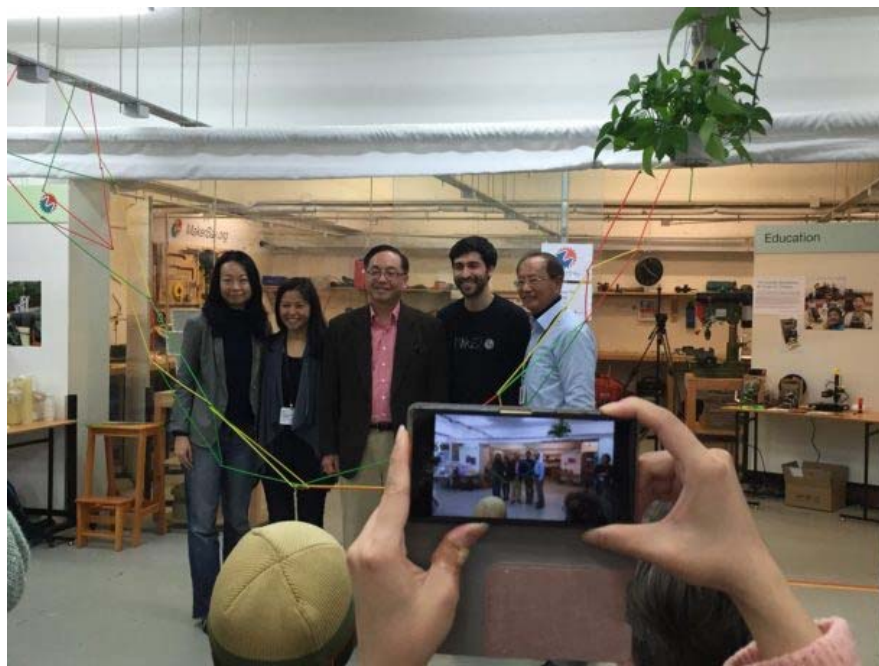


Jan 2016 – Work in progress at the building site (Photo by Design Society)



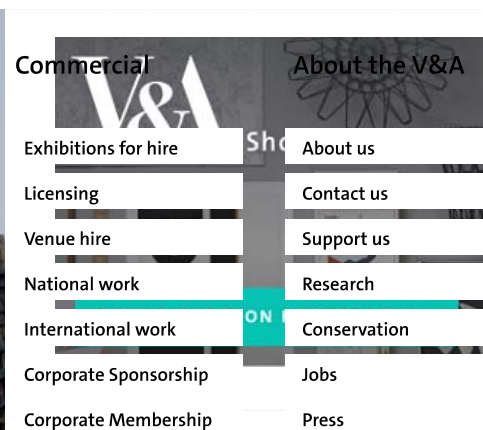
Jan 2016 – The building is taking shape (Photo by Design Society)

At the end of the month **MakerBay**, a maker and co-working space focusing on technology, environment and education officially opened its spaces in Hong Kong. Established by Cesar Harada and managed by Fiona Lau and their team it is now becoming a reference point in the maker and tech-innovation scene of the city.



Jan 30 – Makerbay opening

FEBRUARY – The Hong-Kong Shenzhen Bi-city Biennale held at the Flour Factory in Shekou, Shenzhen, closed on 28 February with a series of talks, events and an award ceremony. The V&A team obtained the 'Bronze Dragon award' for the exhibition 'Unidentified Acts of Design', a project developed as part of the wider collaboration with China Merchants Shekou exploring the Shenzhen manufacturing and innovation scene through the work and words of engineers, developers, makers and technicians who are not typically considered in more conventional discourses about design.



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Feb 9 – UABB visitors looking at UAoD (Photo by L.E. Mengoni)



Feb 26 – Dragon Award for UAoD

During the closing days of UABB Sarah Green, Learning Manager of the Shekou project, organised discussion groups with designers, teachers of Chinese schools, and the local Shekou Community Foundation, as well as visits to local schools.



Feb 25 – School teachers discussion group (Photo by L.E.Mengoni)



Feb 26 – Visit to Harbour School (Photo by L.E.Mengoni)



Feb 27 – Discussion group with creative practitioners (Photo by L.E.Mengoni)



Feb 29 – Discussion at the Shekou Foundation (Photo by L.E.Mengoni)

MARCH – A special ceremony on 19 March marked the launch of Design Society brand and mission with the participation of Zhang Ling, Deputy General Manager of CMSK, Tim Reeve, Deputy Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, as well as representatives of Guanfu Museum and the Maki & Associates Studio.



March 19 – Launch of Design Society (Photo L.E.Mengoni)



March 19 – Design Society team members at the launch (Photo L.E.Mengoni)

APRIL – The research and development work for the learning and public programme continued with visits to a few museums in China and conversations with their education team members.



April 6 – Sharing learning practices with Palace Museum colleagues

More visits were made to universities and schools that have design programmes for undergraduate and postgraduate students, including the Cheung Kong School of Design at Shantou University, Shenzhen Polytechnic and Hong Kong Polytechnic. We talked to teachers to understand their teaching methods and find potential synergies in relation to exhibitions and public programmes. At the Cheung Kong School of Design of Shantou University Ole Bouman, Luisa E. Mengoni and Sarah Green gave a public talk to the students and faculty chaired by the Dean Wang Shouzhi.



April 7 – Class of Digital Design at Cheung Kong School of Design, Shantou University (Photo by L.E.Mengoni)



April 9 – Talk at Shantou University (Photo by Heidi Lee)

MAY – Brendan Cormier and Luisa E. Mengoni, co-curators of the exhibition ‘Unidentified Acts of Design’ gave a public talk organised by Design Trust at Asia Society in Hong Kong. A great opportunity to present the content of the eight short films made for the exhibition and originally presented at the Shenzhen Hong Kong Urbanism\Architecture Bi-city Biennale (UABB) in December 2015. Full versions can be watched on Youku and YouTube by simply searching ‘Unidentified Acts of Design’.



May 9 – Talk at Asia Society (Photo by Design Trust)

The Shekou project continued to receive support and endorsement from the UK government and it was with great pleasure that we hosted the UK Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport – John Whittingdale – for a visit to China Merchants Shekou and Design Society building site as part of his China’s itinerary.



May 20 – Visit of UK Secretary of State (Photo by Design Society)

JUNE – Over the summer preparation for the exhibition of the V&A Gallery, Shekou continued at the V&A in London with Brendan Cormier (Curator), Sunnie Chan (Assistant Curator), Alex Willett (Project Manager), Sarah Green (Learning Manager) and conservators, designers and technical services. Preparatory work was also done for the exhibition ‘Unidentified Acts of Design’ due to be hosted in the T.T. Tsui Gallery of the V&A in South Kensington during London Design Festival.



June 15 – Work in progress in the Paper Conservation Studio of the V&A (Photo by L.E.Mengoni)

JULY – In Shenzhen the summer heat did not slow down city’s activities. An intense debate amongst architects, urban planners, officers, designers, scholars and community workers took place over the months around the issue of urban villages, urban heritage and sustainable models of development, triggered by the specific case of the Hubei village and related urban plans. Public events and activities were held in town and it is particularly relevant that this year UABB, co-curated by URBANUS and Hou Hanru, will focus on urban villages.



July 2 – Debate on Hubei urban village (Photo by L.E.Mengoni)

In the tech scene of the city, a few makerspaces such as Litchee, TGN and others organized over the summer workshops on programming and coding, summer schools and short courses for teenagers, kids and adults. 'Troublemakers', a new hardware accelerator and co-working space established by Hans, Henke, Robert and Nicos, opened their new space in Huaqiangbei attracting a large crowd of makers, developers and entrepreneurs on the day, the future 'troublemakers' community of Shenzhen.



July 9 – the four Troublemakers founders at the opening

AUGUST – The selection for the Design for Asia Award took place at the Polytechnic University in Hong Kong, with the participation of Luisa E. Mengoni from the V&A. The award ceremony was scheduled for November, coinciding with the publication of a catalogue and the full list of nominees and winners. This was a great opportunity to explore the scene of emerging and more established designers practising in several Asian countries.



August 5 – The DFA judging panel (Photo by DFA team)

In August FabLab 12, the annual gatherings of fablabs, took place in Shenzhen for the first time, gathering representatives from all over the world. The 'Hello Shenzhen' programme sponsored by the British Council was also announced and workshops for teachers organised by makerspaces like Litchee Lab.



August 12 – A young participant to Fab Lab 12 interviewed in Huaqiangbei (Photo By L.E.Mengoni)

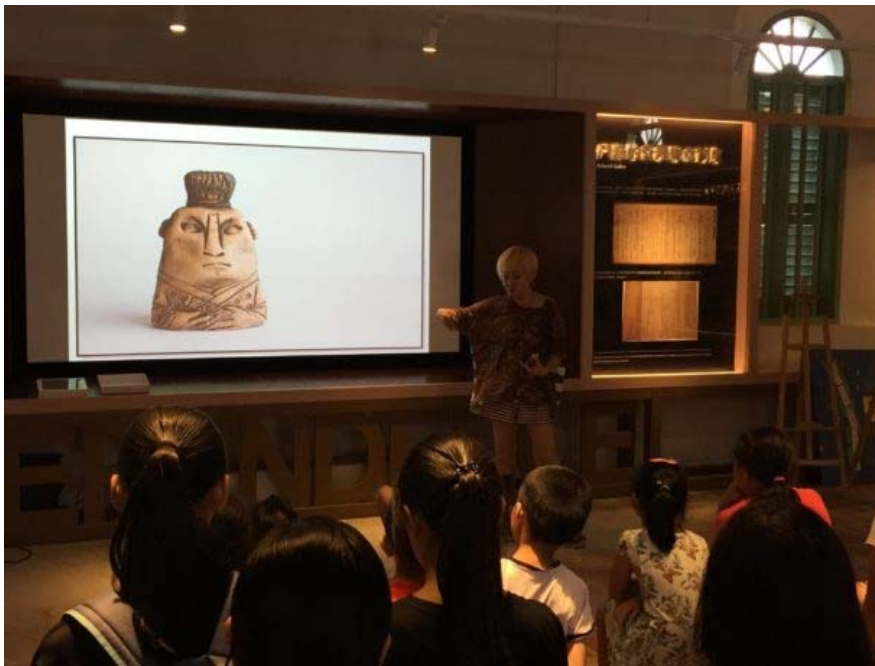


August 13 – A teachers' workshop at FabLab12

At the former 19th century 'Pious and Virtuous' female school, now turned into an art centre, in Longhua New District classes and workshops of visual and performing arts are held over the summer for the kids of the neighborhood under the direction on Mary-Ann O'Donnell. The school was established in 1861 by the Basel Mission and by the the 1920s it offered one of the most liberal education programmes in China. Thanks to the advocacy work by Wang Juxia restoration work was supported by Bao'an and Longhua New District governments and completed in 2015. Head of Programme of the new art centre is Mary Ann O'Donnel.



August 28 – The 'P&V' Art Centre (Photo by L.E.Mengoni)



August 6 – A class on ocharines (Photo by L.E.Mengoni)



August 6 – The team and students of P&V (Photo by L.E.Mengoni)

SEPTEMBER – The exhibition ‘Unidentified Acts of Design’ was shown in the T.T. Tsui Gallery of Chinese Art at the V&A in South Kensington as part of the London Design Festival programme (17-25 Sept). This was a great opportunity to show in the middle of the China Gallery the results of our on-going research in Shenzhen and create unexpected parallels and contrasts with the rest of the collection. LDF’s public programme also featured a talk by the curators Brendan Cormier and Luisa E. Mengoni with extracts from the eight videos produced for the project, and a panel entitled ‘Design and practices in social innovation’ including Daniel Charny, Maria Nicanor, Kevin Lau and David Li organised by Design Society and chaired by Ole Bouman. This first public event by Design Society was followed by other two panels at Beijing Design Week, one of them co-organised with Design Trust, providing a platform to discuss new institutional set-outs and design practices with invited speakers.





OCTOBER – Back in Shenzhen research and work for the V&A Gallery's AV and interactives resumed over September and October with visits to factories, workshops and design studios in preparation for filming later in the month. More visits and training sessions provided more opportunities for learning and exchanges between the V&A and Design Society teams.



Oct 13 – MoreDesign Studio (Photo by L.E.Mengoni)



Oct 26 – Filming in Baishizhou (Photo by Sarah Green)



Oct 24 – DS and V&A teams working hard at Shenzhen Polytechnic



Oct 24 – A training session at Design Society (Photo by Design Society)

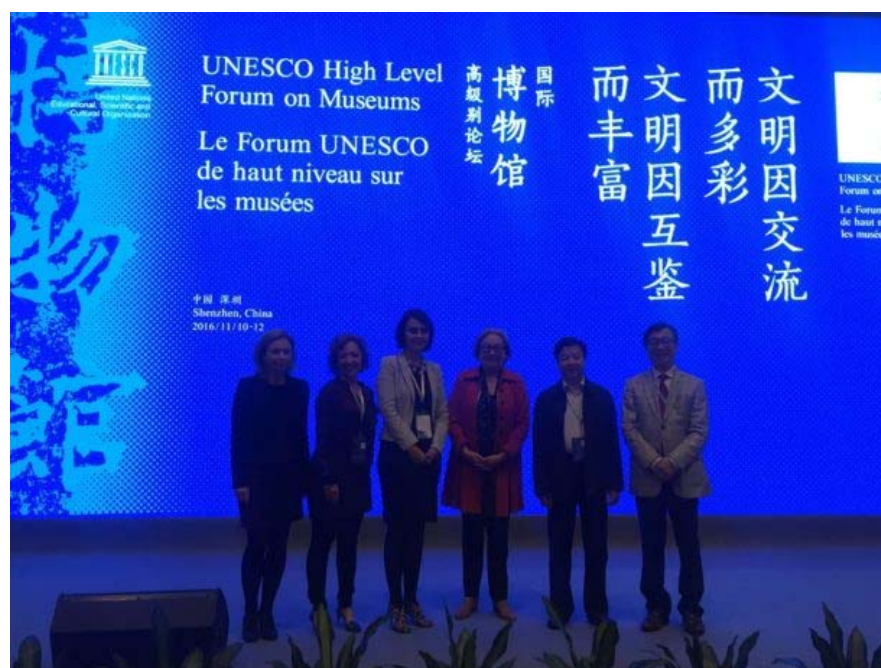
In October the 2016 Mass Innovation and Entrepreneurship Week also took place in Shenzhen. The attendance of speakers and guests such as Prime Minister Li Keqiang, Tim Cook and Jack Ma gave a clear message about the crucial importance of tech companies in Shenzhen for the national economy. This event was followed the week after by a much more grass-root event: the 5th edition of Shenzhen Makerfaire, organised by Chaihuo makerspace under the creative direction of Monica Shen. Design Society made another public appearance at the Zao talks with Ole Bouman in conversation with Kevin Lau, former lead curator of Shenzhen MakerFaire, Qian Yuan, dean of City Planning Institute of Vanke Group and Chang Teng-wen, associate professor of Taiwan Yunlin Univeristy of Science and Technology.



October 22 – Zao Talks at Shenzhen Makerfaire (Photo by L.E.Mengoni)

NOVEMBER – At the UNESCO High Level Forum on Museums on 11 November Luisa E. Mengoni presented the collaboration between the V&A and China Merchants Shekou in the section devoted to 'Greater national and international cooperation for museums', a great opportunity to present our work at Design Society as a new model of international

partnership. Critical issues such as protection of cultural and natural heritage in times of peace and conflict access, ethical standards, emerging museum models, and public policies were discussed over three days by representatives of institutions and organisations from all over the world.

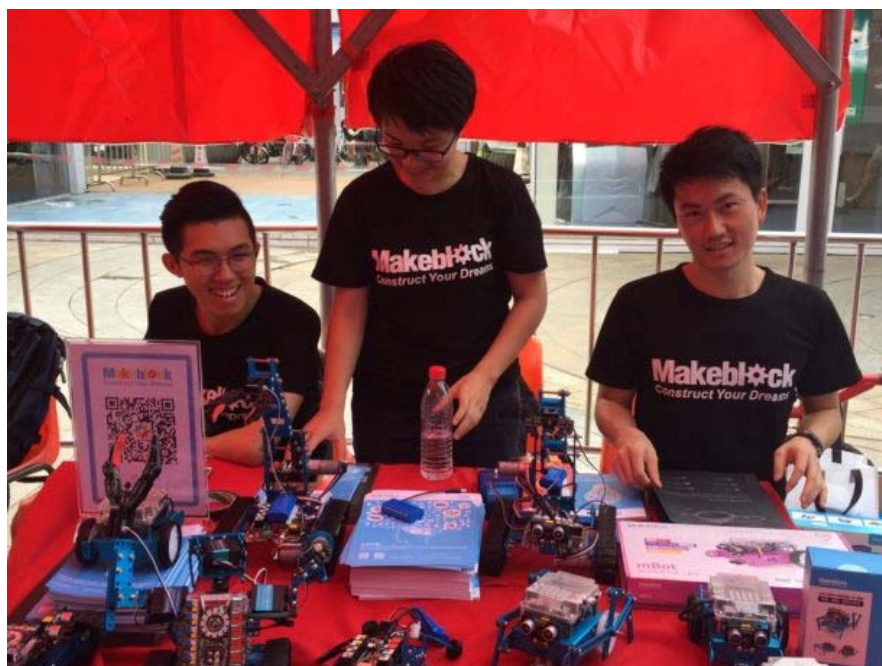


Nov 11 – UNESCO Forum

The first Community Festival – 去!设计社区节 ‘Go! Design Community Festival’ – organised by Design Society was held in the Seaworld Plaza on Sunday 20th of November as part of a wider agenda to engage local communities and provide an opportunity to connect, share experiences and enjoy a different atmosphere. A range of pop-up events, activities and a bazaar were set up with the contribution of young designers, makers, educators, schools and local community’s representatives and encouraged the participation of local residents and visitors of all ages and interests.



Nov 20 – The People’s Canopy, designed by Beijing-based People’s Architect Office (PAO) and stands at Community Festival (photo: L.E.Mengoni)



Nov 20 – Speakers and organisers after the talks at the Community Festival

On the 29th of November M+ in Hong Kong opened their exhibition ‘Shifting Objectives’ in the M+ Pavillion in West Kowloon offering a glimpse of their design collection. Curated by lead curator for Design and Architecture Aric Chen and his team, the show captured key moments in the history of 20th-21st century design through a selection of furniture, posters and homeware as well as less innovative and less canonical design practices of the last few years.



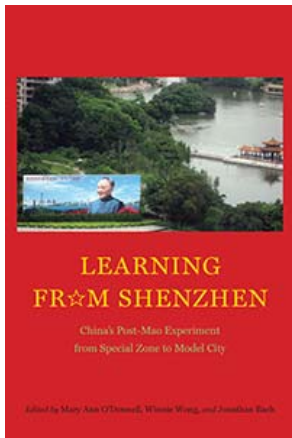
Nov 29 – Opening of Shifting Objectives at M+ Pavillion (Photo by L.E.Mengoni)

DECEMBER – Luisa E. Mengoni and Ole Bouman were invited to participate on 13 December to the DOC Talks of the 10th edition of ‘This is My City – The Creative Festival’ organised by Manuel Correia Da Silva and his team in Macau to discuss about the research work conducted so far by the V&A and Design Society teams in the manufacturing and tech-innovation scene of Shenzhen with special reference to the eight films produced for ‘Unidentified Acts of Design’. This event gave an opportunity to really connect with the creative scene of Macau and establish a fruitful dialogue with some of its protagonists.



Dec 14 – Manuel Correia da Silva and Clara Brito in their design studio (Photo by L.E.Mengoni)

In December the book 'Learning from Shenzhen: Post-Mao experiment from special zone to model city' edited by Mary-Ann O'Donnell, Jonathan Bach and Winnie Wong, was published by The University of Chicago Press, an in-depth research on several aspects of Shenzhen's political history and multi-faceted social reality that was made possible by the long-term research efforts of all its contributors. The official launch of the book took place at Future+ Academy, Shenzhen Design Center, on 14 Jan 2017.



In the same month of December Design Society and the V&A officially announced to the press the opening of Design Society, scheduled for October 2017. The countdown has already started for ten very busy months ahead.



Dec 2016 – The building at the end of the year

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