

# SCAD

## REVITALIZATION AND CONSERVATION OF THE FORMER NORTH KOWLOON MAGISTRACY BUILDING:

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NEW ATTITUDES FOR EDUCATION

2011 UNESCO HERITAGE AWARDS JURY  
COMMENDATION FOR INNOVATION



The west elevation of SCAD Hong Kong after completion of work.

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## SYNOPSIS OF REVITALIZATION PROJECT

The project goals were to both conserve and bring new life to the decommissioned former North Kowloon Magistracy building. With the vision established by the Hong Kong government, SCAD conducted a thorough evaluation of the magistracy, the site and its potential use. SCAD would integrate forward-thinking educational and creative arts uses to the benefit of the magistracy's local and regional legacy and bring new life in the form of an international university for the arts.

The magistracy that once stood as a representation of colonial rule and law would be transformed into a place of learning and expression. The core concepts of heritage conservation would be entwined in the design and planning of the project, which would allow for the continued social and community interaction of an important part of Hong Kong's history.



A view of Sham Shui Po from the hillside above the former magistracy.

The magistracy building was built, originally, as a single purpose design to house a court system in the Sham Shui Po district. Throughout its life, many additions and alterations were undertaken to the interior plan to contain growing offices and expanded purpose. Original materials in important public spaces were chosen, fortunately, for their material strength and durability. Specialized areas, unique to the court process, were also constructed to last for many years. Heritage planning and unique design solutions were interwoven to ensure that the resulting conserved structure both told its story of the past and brought contemporary purpose to its future. The transformation of the magistracy building commenced in December 2009 and finished in September 2010.

SCAD conserved, revitalized and repurposed the 70,000-square-foot structure for US\$12.5 million.



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

# DESIGN CONCEPT

Aided by guidelines established by the Hong Kong Development Bureau and the Antiquities and Monuments Office, SCAD and its design team undertook a plan that conserved and preserved important elements of the building while incorporating unique design concepts for its new intended use. As defined in the revitalization scheme for the magistracy, design priorities included a complete and detailed

analysis for retention and incorporation of heritage elements in the building's future. Many finishes were covered by years of dirt and detritus and were awaiting an opportunity to shine again. The university design team, which has itself preserved more than 70 historic structures along with local architects, undertook the project with a high standard for design and great respect for the building's history.

## SCOPE OF PROJECT

The revitalization of the North Kowloon Magistracy was based on a direct and simple conservation plan that sought to preserve as much original artifact while introducing contemporary environmental systems, health and safety measures, and creating a stimulating academic space. The central core of the building, as found in the three floors of lobbies, was to be retained and conserved. The exterior façade, entry doors and site configuration were also to be retained. Former office spaces and lower courtrooms of the upper floors were to be documented and re-configured as classroom and administrative space while also keeping as much original material as would be suitable. Jail cells,

a primary courtroom and wall openings on the first three floors would be retained and conserved as well as windows and original doors. New work included the well-planned addition of fire suppression systems, electrical circuits, air conditioning, and re-configured restrooms as well as compliant stair systems. All new work met the criteria set forth by the Hong Kong Antiquities and Monuments Office, buildings department and other relevant agencies. The majority of the new work and reconfiguring of space can be found on the fourth and fifth floors where new classrooms, studios and laboratory units have been placed.

## CONSTRUCTION PHASES

The first phase of the project began in December 2009 and included intensive documentation, measurement and on-site planning. The demolition of interior walls on the upper floors commenced in January of 2010 and continued from upper to lower floors for three months. Phase one included the installation of protective walls and floor barriers to ensure that materials to be conserved were intact.

The second phase of construction started in March of 2010. This phase included the introduction of new services starting on the fifth floor, re-roofing of the building, site preparation for cooling towers and tanks, as well as stabilization of concrete walls. With the installation of scaffolding, exterior wall repairs and window conservation commenced. Elevator systems were also introduced in phase two.

Phase three included the installation of the water tank and cooling towers in April of 2010. In addition, floor leveling,

completion of new walls and refinishing began on the upper floors and followed mechanical services installation from the top to bottom of the building. Upgrades and introduction of new stair systems occurred in phase three.

Phase four began in May 2010 and included the installation of finished walls, painting, epoxy resin application to floors and the installation of new door systems and elevators. Conservation commenced in earnest in phase four, preceded by the testing of materials and finalization of means of conservation. On lower lobby floors plaster ceilings, marble walls and stone floors were cleaned, conserved and repaired. All woodwork and door hardware was conserved or refinished in phase four.

Practical completion of work was completed in mid-August and was followed by the placement of furnishings and equipment. Classes began on Sept. 15, 2010.



## EXTERIOR

The exterior of the building was conserved to its original profile. Original steel windows and glass as well as iron railings and stone detailing were conserved. Massive bronze doors remain and were restored to working order.

Door entries at lower ground floors were revised and brought to code, yet reflect original profiles in a respectful manner. Mechanical service units were detached and separated from the main building. All connections and supplies discretely and thoughtfully run underground and do not interfere with the conserved elevations. The end result is a building that reflects its original design and purpose yet meets the needs of a university.

Following the detailed heritage assessment and interior inventory of the building planning resulted in a three tiered approach to prioritizing of conservation of heritage elements on all floors. Those areas that had the greatest story to tell received the highest level of treatment, while spaces such as offices and lower-level courts on upper floors were modified to meet the need of academic environments. A third design path allowed for retention of originality, conservation, full heritage interpretation as well as new use in the academic programs.

## INTERIOR CIRCULATION

Plans devised from the consideration of the original purpose of the design allowed for the highest use of existing stairways, elevator placement and means of egress. Minimal

compromises were made, which ensured that the structure met all contemporary code requirements, yet preserved and highlighted prioritized heritage spaces.



The second-floor lobby space during the engineering analysis period prior to work.

## INTRODUCTION OF MODERN MECHANICAL SYSTEMS

Mechanical systems introduced to bring the magistracy to an environmentally sustainable and contemporary standard, were installed with consideration for the space's heritage.

Considering that the original structure had only minimal services, today's product is a major design accomplishment.



A skylight was installed that enclosed the light well and transformed it into a sculpture space.

## PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

As the first project of batch one of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region's "Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme," SCAD Hong Kong's design and sensitivity towards heritage conservation meets the highest standards and a leading example for future revitalization works in Hong Kong.

Attention to detail and respect for the magistracy's heritage would direct the planning for removal of prior additions and mechanical systems while new modifications would complement the historic fabric.

The change of use from a judiciary center to a university for the arts exemplifies the potential for integrating quality design and new uses into heritage spaces.

As a new member of the Sham Shui Po community, SCAD demonstrates that the creative arts and higher education are positive, respectful additions and solutions to change in the urban space.

The project, through design excellence, creates a positive environment for students to prepare themselves for future professional endeavors.



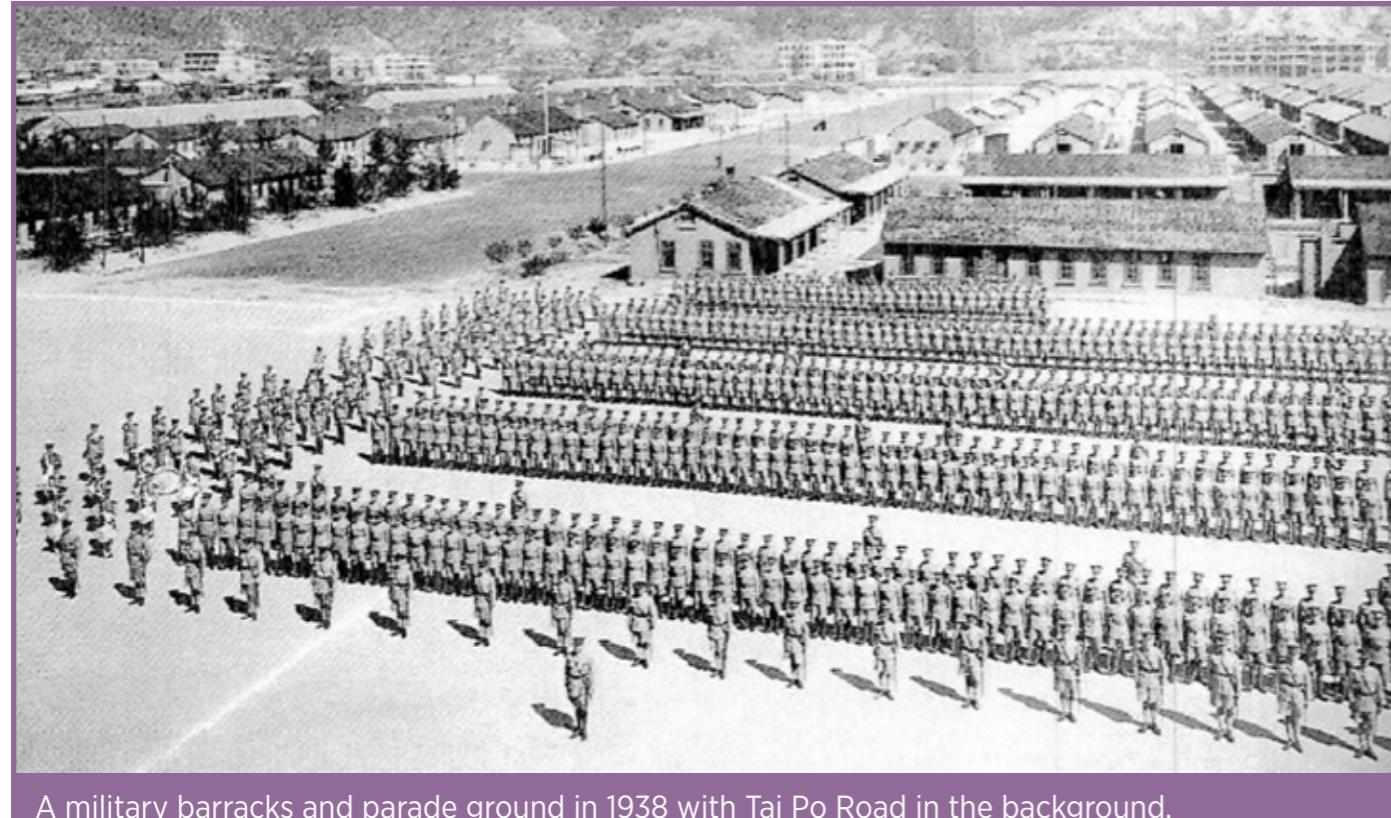
Photography students document a community celebration. Students of photography, graphic design and historic preservation gathered images and stories of the Sham Shui Po District for a publication scheduled for release in 2011.

# BACKGROUND OF SITE

## 1900-1960

The Qing Imperial Court leased the region of Sham Shui Po to the British government in 1898. Tai Po Road was constructed in the early 1900s to join Sham Shui Po and Kowloon as well as the New Territories. From the 1920s on, the region saw development in the form of new roads, businesses,

and a military barracks and depot. During the invasion and occupation of Hong Kong, the Japanese entered Kowloon by way of Tai Po Road from the New Territories. In 1953, the immediate community of the magistracy saw the Great Fire of Christmas Day in Shek Kip Mai.



A military barracks and parade ground in 1938 with Tai Po Road in the background.

## 1960-2005

The North Kowloon Magistracy was designed by the private firm Palmer and Turner Architects and built in 1960. Once complete, the building functioned as magistrates court and offices for various government members. The magistracy was one of Hong Kong's busiest following the closing of the South Kowloon Magistracy in 2000. It dealt with lower court cases from Mong Kok, Sham Shui Po, Shek Kip Mai, Cheung Sha Wan and Ho Man Tin police stations. The North Kowloon Magistracy ceased operations in January 2005 due to consolidation of magistracies. The cases of the magistracy were redistributed to courts in Kwun Tong and Kowloon city magistracies.

## 2005-2010

The magistracy closed in 2005 and remained vacant until 2007 when it was selected to participate in the first batch of projects of the "Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme" announced by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's Development Bureau. In 2008, SCAD through its local identity, the SCAD Foundation Hong Kong Limited, a non-profit organization registered in Hong Kong, submitted a detailed conservation plan to the development bureau for the adaptive reuse of the building. Following a detailed review, the development bureau accepted the SCAD proposal and granted approval in 2009. Work commenced on the project in December of 2009 and doors were opened to the first class of students in September 2010. Since 2010, the university has had two sessions of classes providing world class education in the arts to more than 140 students. The university self-financed the initial project and all construction work and equipment costs. No public or government funds were used in this undertaking.



The North Kowloon Magistracy following completion in 1960.

## HERITAGE STATUS

The former North Kowloon Magistracy building was listed as a Grade II structure in 2010.

## PROJECT DEMONSTRATION OF THE CRITERIA FOR THE JURY COMMENDATION

### REVITALIZATION AND CONSERVATION: NEW ATTITUDES FOR EDUCATION

The success of the revitalization of the North Kowloon Magistracy can be found in the planner's and designer's unique approach to the interaction of heritage conservation and new purposed design. SCAD has a well-documented and acclaimed history of preserving architecture for the purpose of education in the United States, Europe and now Hong Kong. In Savannah, Georgia, USA, the university has conserved and repurposed more than 60 structures,

many within the Historic District for which it has received numerous awards and recognition. Globally, the university has repurposed or restored more than 70 structures totaling 3.2 million square feet. The university's efforts have both preserved and conserved important elements of the past and aided in the regeneration and economic advancement of communities. The principles of conservation are clearly evident and recognized in the schools many projects.