

Centre stage: the Design Society in Shenzhen is a platform for urban life

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The Design Society, designed by the Japanese architects Maki & Associates, is a cultural initiative intended to present and activate international and local design

INFORMATION

For more information visit the [Design Society website](#) and the [Maki & Associates website](#)

ADDRESS

Design Society | Sea World
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One of the most useful things you can do upon arrival in Shekou, Shenzhen is to discard any pre-conceived ideas of the city. Reflections on how it was once a fishing village, or how it has transformed itself from an industrial powerhouse into a high-tech centre are irrelevant because Shenzheners are already repositioning the city as a creative cultural hub, complete with a newly unveiled Design Society, a cultural initiative intended to present and activate international and local design.

The elegant modernist building unveiled in early December is by the Japanese architects Maki & Associates and features three distinctive white aluminium cantilevered 'volumes' that protrude from a cubic form to maximise the prime waterfront park site's views of the sea, the city and one of the area's most revered mountains.

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According to Fumikiko Maki, the 89-year old architect, designing the 'social aspects' of the building was the most important part of the RMB1.3bn project. 'The purpose of a museum is changing. You have to design not just for showing something important, but to be together.' To this end, Maki thoughtfully integrated an urban podium into the building's façade, creating sweeping staircases that provide seating and also lead up either side of the building to a roof terrace.



The 71,000 sq m of space over six floors also house a maze of workshops and educational spaces, a café and a restaurant, a theatre, and a shop

Inside, a ground-level path 'meanders' through three light-filled lofty atriums with galleries, including one designed by Sam Jacob Studio to house over 250 design objects from the V&A. The venture is part of an exclusive partnership with the British institution that will last until 2020.

The 71,000 sq m space, over six floors, also houses a maze of workshops and educational spaces, a café and a restaurant, a theatre, and a shop with an innovative pop-up space highlighting local creatives' works.

The Main Gallery inaugural exhibition, 'Minding the Digital' displayed works such as digitally fabricated furniture by Chinese designer Zhang Zhoujie, and lighting by Hong Kong-based designer Michael Young for Lasvit. Maki's own exhibition however stole the show with its intriguing glimpse of his signature design principles explored through sketches, models and a selection of past projects.



The building features three distinctive white aluminium cantilevered 'volumes' that protrude from a cubic form



Once a fishing village, Shenzhen transformed itself into an industrial powerhouse



The 'social aspects' of the building were the most important part of the design for the architects



The three galleries, include one designed by Sam Jacob Studio which is designed to house over 250 design objects from the V&A collection. *Photography: Zhang Chao*



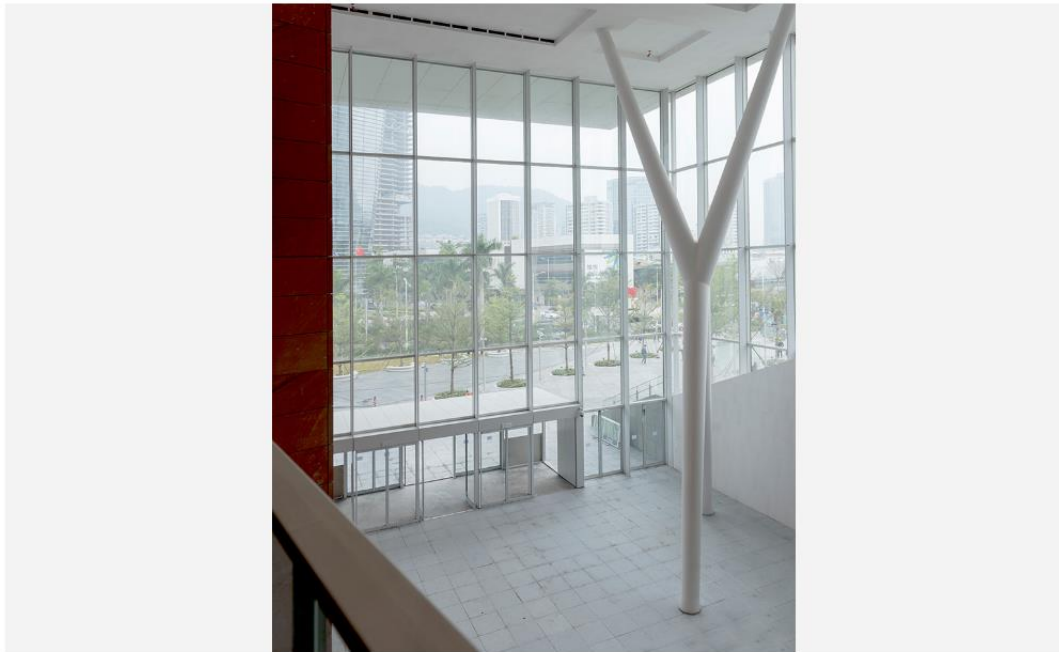
The current exhibition in the V&A gallery is titled 'Values of Design'. *Photography: Zhang Chao*



Sam Jacob Studio's exhibition design for the Design Society gallery. *Photography: Zhang Chao*



The interior is made up of three light-filled lofty atriums



The double height lobby atrium is open and welcoming



An urban podium is integrated into the building's façade