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Enjoy the beauty of the city with creative designs

By Li Yage

From the skyline of skyscrapers to tables and benches in public spaces, our urban landscape defines the form and shape of the city in every stroke.

LASALLE College of the Arts' School of Spatial & Product Design has collaborated with the Marina Central district to hold a public design exhibition called Sociable Scape from 16 May to 30 June. The exhibition includes eight public facilities of a range of styles and functions, in landmark buildings such as Marina Square, Millenia Walk, South Beach Tower, Suntec City and Esplanade. The facilities were designed by eight LASALLE graduands. The project collaborates with regional studios such as Deesawat, Superform, Kenkoon Furniture and CPAC, to help the designers align with industrial standards.

When planning urban public spaces, designers should give priority to human needs, rethink the diversity of public facilities from a people-centred perspective, and make life better through design. During the exhibition, if you have time to stroll around the city centre, you may wish to stop and experience some of these public facilities. From providing seats for busy urbanites to rest, to a selfie platform which caters to modern people's habit of checking in and taking pictures, there are plenty of innovative ideas in public facilities and ingenuity reflected in the small things.

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Multi-angle selfie platform promoting interaction

Taking selfies is a favourite hobby of modern people. When Nur Batrisyia Binte Nazeer Ali learned that she would have the opportunity to design a public facility for the Marina Bay area, she made a special trip to inspect the place. She noticed that as one of Singapore's most visited landmarks, Marina Bay attracted many tourists and families to take photos here as keepsakes. Many did not bring selfie sticks, making it difficult for them to take group photos. She thought that it would be a thoughtful move to install a facility such as a photo platform to facilitate taking a selfie from various angles and heights so as to help tourists record their unforgettable journey.

Taking inspiration from the curves of the exteriors of surrounding buildings, Batrisyia designed a photo platform called *Lenscape*. There are slots on top of several pillars, in which one can place a mobile phone horizontally or vertically to allow photo taking with either the front or rear lens, and the phone can be stably supported from a variety of angles. The height of the photo platform ranges from 54 centimetres to 1.2 metres, allowing various photo-taking positions. Some people like full-body, long shots, while others like to sit on the ground, thereby producing different visual effects. As a shared facility, when several groups of people use different slots to place their mobile phones and take photos, they may naturally develop conversation topics, which promotes communication and shared experiences, as well as encourages interaction between people.

Fish baskets carry the story of small fishing villages

When Choo Khai Sin stood in the open space of Marina Square and looked from afar at the Singapore River and the high-rise buildings built along the river, from a designer's perspective, she was filled with emotions and wondered how the country developed from a small fishing village to today's modern metropolis. The fishing village of yesteryears reminded her of the baskets that fishermen used to catch fish in and the nets they used to dry them. The public bench named *Baskets* which she designed was inspired by these fish baskets and fish drying nets, paying tribute to the arduous work of her ancestors.

The two-part design has a single seat and a double seat. The bottom of the single seat is like an upside-down bamboo basket, while the double seat is wider in front and narrower in the back, shaped like a fish. Above the seats, a cooling net made using a similar double-layer weaving technique provides shade so pedestrians can enjoy some cool air. She chose orange as a colour for the seats, which is full of positive energy and echoes the vigorous pace of urban development. The fish basket-inspired bench stands in a corner of Marina Square, silently witnessing Singapore's development from a small fishing village to a modern metropolis.

Nyonya style entering city life

The public rest area at Millenia Walk has several blue and white Nyonya-style benches, allowing visitors to stop and sit down during their strolls. Luk Tsz Min's design was inspired by Nyonya tiles. As an important design element from multi-racial integration, Nyonya tiles have a rich cultural heritage behind them. The design concept for the look of the bench is to slightly raise the four corners of a square Nyonya tile with a side length of 1.4 meters so that it is three

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dimensional, and people can sit on the edges. The bench looks like a magic carpet from a distance, and up close, one can admire the blue and white pattern.

The designer hoped to let Nyonya elements continue to appear in urban life in new forms, by incorporating traditional Nyonya patterns into modern aesthetics and displaying them in public spaces. The two designs currently on display are mainly blue and white, and the same design can also be presented in red or green of the same colour scale. No matter where Nyonya tile seats are placed in public spaces, such as HDB void decks, corners of parks or communities, they can perfectly blend into the urban background.

Take a rest and let go of your thoughts

Jessica Olivia Pandjang, the designer of the bench called *LOOOP* located in a public space outside Suntec City, delicately captured the tangled thoughts of office workers in the bustling metropolis. Several loop lines flow from the top down and wrap around to form a lounge chair with a backrest. Made with 3D concrete printing technology, it has a complex structure with simple lines. It has taken ergonomics into consideration and offers functionality and comfort. From a distance, the seat looks like a visually impactful sculpture in the city centre.

The meaning of tranquillity amidst the hustle and bustle is to provide a peaceful haven for busy people around the city. The human-centred design philosophy symbolises the endless and entangled thoughts in the minds of office workers. Why not let these thoughts go up in smoke and scatter away with the wind while taking a break on the lounge chair.

Outer covering of the fences transformed into floor mats

Walking around the Esplanade, the inconspicuous fences in the corner caught Seraphine Lim Jia Yi's attention. These movable stainless-steel fences are often used for crowd control before a performance. When not in use, the fences are covered and put aside. On the other side, many domestic workers and migrant workers often visit this area on weekends for leisure. They like to sit on plastic sheets on the ground and share delicious food. Lim Jia Yi thought: why not create a space for everyone, let the fences play more roles, and cover them with removable floor mats for people to use?

Fix velcro on both sides of a floor mat and it can be folded and used as a cover for the fence. If a group of migrant workers needs a floor mat, they can open the Velcro on both sides, take it off to turn it into a large mat and put it back on the fence after use. This dual use design eliminates the need to worry about the storage problem of floor mats and allows a shared facility to be repeatedly used among different groups. Starting from a perspective of inclusivity, she designed for a warm resting place for migrant workers, providing heartwarming care though an urban public facility. The fences next to the theatre originally created a sense of distance in the physical space and kept people at arm's length. After the redesign, the fences have dual uses, conveying a sense of acceptance through the inclusive design.

Children's facilities in urban spaces

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Hagen Lim Yi Chong noticed that there was a comprehensive range of facilities for adults to enjoy in the city centre, but a lack of space for children to play in. The public facility he designed at an exit of Suntec City can be used both as seats as well as a children's play facility. The wooden appearance echoes nature, and the slightly sloping design paired with small steps going up the slopes provides a height suitable for children to climb.

The concept of the entire series is made up of multiple arbitrary shapes randomly spliced together, like the irregular shapes of broken glaciers. Expressive geometric silhouettes embody the dance of form and function. Various geometric shapes can be dynamically spliced and transformed, seamlessly integrating into any urban space, whether it is a concrete high-rise area or a corner of a community park. This public seat cum play structure can start conversations among different age groups as people interact with it in diverse ways, whether sitting down to rest or climbing up to play.

Telling the story of military camps using local materials

Located in the public space on the ground floor of South Beach Tower, there is a bench made of solid teak and stainless steel. Four cylinders of varied sizes like hollow log cakes are stacked up to form a double-levelled bench, where the public can stop and rest on. This bench is called *Logged* and is designed by Koh Shu Peng who was inspired by Jacob's ladder, a common obstacle course that young men will all go through when serving their national service.

Since the grounds was formerly the NCO Club of the Armed Forces, the designer drew inspiration from its military past as a starting point to redesign the public bench. In addition to being stacked up, each cylindrical shape can be separated individually and laid out in a row. Different shapes can be freely combined according to the size of the space.

Next to the Logged bench, there is a high chair called *DIVE*. From a distance, it looks like a diving platform next to a swimming pool, or a highchair designated for lifeguards. The teak chair surface is slightly curved like a wave, and a stainless-steel frame supports the high stool. The designer Jasmine Koh Xiu Zhen considered the fact that the first Olympic-sized swimming pool in Singapore was once here, and took inspiration from the stairs next to the swimming pool. She designed three high chairs of heights 60, 75 and 90 centimetres, which allowed people of different heights to sit together and enjoy a moment of relaxation. A chair in a bustling city reminds people to pause, reflect and experience joy from the simple beauty of life.