

Pocket Spaces by Lee Ngai Man Wins Gold in A' Social Design Award

Social Playbook Transforms High-Density Housing Corridors Into Co-Creation Spaces for Residents

COMO, CO, ITALY, September 4, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The A' Design Award has announced Pocket Spaces by [Lee Ngai Man](#) as a Gold winner in the [Social](#) Design category. Pocket Spaces, presented as a Social Playbook, is a social intervention guide developed for high-density housing estates that empowers elderly residents and children to transform narrow corridors and stairwells into shared spaces. The A' Design Award is one of the highly respected and well-recognized international [design competitions](#) in the field of social design, recognizing works that demonstrate strong merit through a rigorous and impartial evaluation. This recognition positions Pocket Spaces among a distinguished group of projects acknowledged for their contribution to community resilience and thoughtful design.



Pocket Spaces

Pocket Spaces addresses a pressing concern within the social design field, namely spatial injustice in dense urban environments where living space in Hong Kong averages 15.5 square meters per person. The project responds to a growing demand for community-led approaches that prioritize human connection over distant, top-down planning. By establishing an open infrastructure system grounded in grassroots materials, the design aligns with industry movements toward participation, sustainability, and inclusive growth. The practical benefits extend to residents who gain spatial autonomy, to communities that strengthen neighborly bonds, and to planners seeking scalable models for urban social resilience. Field research recorded a 40 percent increase in neighborly interactions following the intervention.

The core product is a 12-page A5 portable manual printed on 100 percent recycled paper, paired with an assembly system that uses local material cycles such as common public estate items and wood collected from community waste. Assembly employs low-barrier connections, including industrial cable ties and simple clamps, allowing non-professionals to construct modular units in 30 minutes without specialized tools. Drawing on 700 hours of immersive ethnography and 500 resident interviews, the design translates scattered grassroots wisdom into a systematic guide. The project is characterized by zero marginal cost and rapid scalability, distinguishing it through accessibility and replicability. It functions as a mobile preservation system that allows social relationships to migrate and integrate into future housing plans.

The Gold A' Design Award recognition for Pocket Spaces serves as encouragement for Estate of Mine to continue developing community-centered solutions. The acknowledgment may inform future projects that further explore spatial autonomy, participatory methodologies, and social resilience in dense urban settings. This recognition reinforces the studio's commitment to bridging official planning and the lived realities of residents, fostering ongoing innovation in social design practice.

Project Members

Pocket Spaces was developed by a collaborative team. Lee Ngai Man led the social design research and intervention framework. Pak Hei Wang contributed to the project alongside Kai Yin Lin, Nga Suet Julytha Ho, and Hiu Man Chiu, each supporting the field research, co-design sessions, and prototyping that shaped the final outcome.

Interested parties may learn more about the award-winning design, its features, and its creators at the dedicated page on the A' Design Award website.

<https://competition.adesignaward.com/ada-winner-design.php?ID=181246>

About Lee Ngai Man

Lee Ngai Man is a social designer from Hong Kong, China, working with Estate of Mine, a social design studio dedicated to developing community-centric solutions through multidisciplinary research and creative intervention. The studio operates at the intersection of urban space, social equity, and collective well-being, focusing on projects that facilitate dialogue between citizens and their environments. By utilizing participatory design methodologies, the studio transforms complex social challenges into tangible prototypes and public programs. Its work has been recognized for its contribution to community resilience and sustainable urban development.

About Estate Of Mine

Estate of Mine is a social design collective formed by students from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The team observes that public housing design has often become impersonal, focusing on physical buildings rather than the people who live in them, which can leave neighbors disconnected and weaken community bonds. In response, Estate of Mine acts as a bridge between official planning and the actual lives of residents, bringing empathy back into the design process through deep human engagement. The process begins with discovery and

ethnographic research, where designers speak one on one with residents to uncover hidden needs, followed by co-design sessions and workshops that invite residents to shape the solutions themselves. The team then applies iterative prototyping to build quick, tangible models and conducts on-site pilot testing to evaluate ideas in real conditions. Through this approach, Estate of Mine aims to turn design into a living social system that keeps Hong Kong communities strong and connected.

About the Gold A' Design Award Recognition

The Gold A' Design Award is granted to designs that demonstrate a high level of innovation and a meaningful impact on their intended audience. Recognized as a notable achievement by the A' Design Award, these designs reflect a visionary approach and the considerable skill of their creators. In the Social Design category, entries are evaluated against criteria including inclusive approach, community engagement, social impact, sustainability consideration, ethical standards, innovative solutions, cultural sensitivity, user-centered design, accessibility enhancement, economic viability, scalability potential, collaboration and partnership, empowerment of participants, respect for diversity, design aesthetics, long-term benefits, resource efficiency, feasibility of implementation, stakeholder involvement, and measurable outcomes. Designs receiving this designation serve as benchmarks for excellence and encourage further innovation across art, science, design, and technology.

About A' Design Award

The A' Social Design Award is an international and juried design competition that welcomes a diverse range of participants, including designers, design agencies, companies, brands, and organizations operating within the social design field. Entries are evaluated through a blind peer-review process and assessed against pre-established criteria by an expert jury panel composed of design professionals, social industry experts, journalists, and academics. Organized since 2008 and now in its 18th year, the competition is open to entries from all countries and across all industries. The ultimate aim of the A' Design Award is to recognize and promote superior products and projects that advance and benefit society, driven by a philanthropic mission to enhance the world through the power of good design. Interested parties may learn more about the A' Design Award, explore the jury members, view past laureates, and submit their own projects at the following url: <https://goldensocialprojectawards.com>

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