**Celebrating Collective Creativity Champions**

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The DFA Awards is one of the Asia’s most prestigious design awards, honouring exceptional design leaders and projects that contribute to societal betterment. Celebrating projects at the forefront of design excellence that incorporate with Asian perspectives, 2021 saw trailblazers who are striving to make the world a better place through collective creativity.

Among the recipients this year was DFA Lifetime Achievement Award winner [Patrick Whitney](https://laa.dfaawards.com/en/winner/), professor in residence at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, who we asked to share his views on collective creativity: “In the past, design projects commonly started with a ‘design brief’ written by the client. The designer retreated to the studio to develop ideas, presented the ideas a few times to be sure the brief was being followed, and finally gave an elaborate presentation to an audience of executives. Today, it is common to do away with the brief and instead run a series of workshops that include designers, users, and key representatives from the client. The client and user become an active part of the team. This expands the range of experimentation and gives a deeper understanding and sense of ownership by the client.”

A notable project which made users a key part of the team was the [transformation of the Yi Pei Square Playground](https://dfaawards.viewingrooms.com/content/feature/215/artworks-9810-design-trust-futures-studio-transformation-of-yi-pei-design-trust-an-initiative-of-the-hong-kong/) in Hong Kong by DESIGN TRUST FUTURES STUDIO (DTFS). Winning the DFA Design for Asia Awards – Grand Award this year, DTFS first conducted fieldwork and research to understand the needs of the area’s residents, with architects and designers integrating these into their design for a community-oriented space that brought collective creativity to life. The final inclusive neighbourhood space overturns the perception that design is embellishment serving commercial purposes for privileged groups. “‘Design’ is very much part of our everyday. We see the need for ergonomically well-designed public spaces,” says DTFS Co-Founder and Executive Director, Marisa Yiu. “Through these projects, we envision a richer dialogue—one in which a culture of experimentation, new ideas and innovative possibilities can build a stronger future.”

For Kenrick Wong and Magic Kwan, Co-Founders and Design Principals at Orient Occident Atelier (OOA) and recipients of this year’s DFA Design for Asia Awards – Grand Award for Sustainability, collective creativity is about “unity in diversity and the importance of involvement of differences”. Their team’s [WaterHall Project](https://dfaawards.viewingrooms.com/content/feature/215/artworks-9819-waterhall-project-cambodia-orient-occident-atelier-ooa-hong-kong/) in Cambodia is a twin structure designed for rainwater collection that doubles as a community hall. OOA studied and investigated the surrounding structures and used accessible, low-cost, and easily replicated materials so villagers could repeat and sustain the designs in the future. Collective creativity is also ultimately related to people, and as they add, “it’s (architecture) about how people are connected or not connected. […] the user-designer connection is essential for us to continue to move forward in other projects.”

This year’s awardees showcase unique visions and innovative ideas, and it was fascinating to see different interpretations of collective creativity. As Whitney shares, “Design can play an expanded role in grappling with large ambiguous problems by using frameworks and methods to define what an offering should be, not just what it should look like. […] Design frameworks can create solutions that are simultaneously good for people, organisations, and nature.”

The DFA Awards celebrated its 19th year in 2021 and has recognised over 2,200 awardees to date. It has grown its international influence in Asia with 5 award programmes, including DFA Lifetime Achievement Award, DFA Design Leadership Award, DFA World’s Outstanding Chinese Designer, DFA Design for Asia Awards and DFA Hong Kong Young Design Talent Award, to acknowledge design leaders for their contributions to the industry.

Congratulations again to this year’s remarkable winners. You can browse the newly launched [DFA Awards 2021 online showcase](https://dfaawards.viewingrooms.com/viewing-room/) for the awardees and their winning projects.