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Nanjing New... A Museum Makes Its Debut

www.hinge.hk

ISSN 1541-781-5
HK\$80
RMB80
US\$11



Walking Art...
Hong Kong Galleries open up

Building in a Bottle...
Or made of them, in Taiwan

Glenn Pushelberg...
Speaks out for Beauty

PRIMARY COLOURS

Bailly School Complex Mikou Design Studio



This cheerful little education complex includes a preschool, a primary school, a recreation centre and a cafeteria, and is seen as heading an effort at neighbourhood revitalisation. A quite simple layout diagram presents the aspects of the programme as part of a unified – and colourful – whole, rather than emphasising its parts. Essentially a series of linearly grouped pavilions perpendicular to the street, ‘resting’, as it were, on a streetside circulation spine or ‘promenade’. Classrooms run from street toward railway tracks, on two levels, with large expanses of glazing and colourful finishes in primary colours for ready identification and orientation by the kids. Between the rows of classrooms are courtyards that offer protected, quieter areas for play and gaining natural light. To the north and south sides of the main building blocks are play and recreation areas. Acoustic screens made out of circular tubes

absorb noise from without and from within (when the play gets rambunctious). Small garden spaces are accessible from the schoolyard via a ramp, and serve the classrooms as direct fresh-air or recess spaces.

As the building is low in height and visible from surrounding structures, the architects enlivened its roofs with colourful plantings that can be enjoyed by both students and neighbours. The interiors of the building are straightforward academic environments for young people, dressed up modestly in bright tones of green, yellow, blue and white, and these colours pop out on the street facade as well, on the underside of a series of unequal roof overhangs. This elevation is the most iconic of the building, and aptly expresses the parts of collective elements, as well as the perpendicular overlap of classroom rows with circulation corridor, all behind a lively glazed curtain wall.

The building is humble in scale and formal ambition, but makes an effort to fit into its small-scale context, very much trying to be an architectural good neighbour. And it is. There is something undeniably uplifting in the use of bold patches of familiar colours, and the almost entirely glazed main facade projects openness and welcome, even while fretting and screens offer the children some privacy. One can quickly understand why the complex has become a social focal point of the area around it.

