

Project name **Les Saisons**

Location **Sai Wan Ho**

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Les Saisons, Sai Wan Ho

Seasonal change

by Tim Youngs

When joint developers Swire Properties, Sun Hung Kai Properties and China Motor Bus embarked on the Les Saisons residential project in 1998, an innovative design was sought to stand out on the Sai Wan Ho waterfront site.

On examining the site and surrounding developments, both existing and proposed, architects Wong Tung & Partners quickly arrived at an ingenious approach to position Les Saisons' residential development diagonally in an arc across the squarish site. This curved arrangement orientates the blocks towards

the Lei Yue Mun Strait and the wide swathe of green open space to its east, while avoiding directly facing nearby proposed and anticipated developments. The result is a layered, cartwheel plan with the main frontage facing the harbour, maximising sea views while avoiding self-overlooking. On the inland-facing side of the





development, smaller two-bedroom apartment units enjoy garden views within the development and further open vistas, while the upper levels of the eastern fourth tower benefit from sight lines stretching all the way to Central.

The interlocked structure is actually created by joining four atypical tower designs together, increasing in height from 41 to 47 storeys to create an engaging profile.

According to Jim Ho, project design architect at Wong Tung & Partners, designing the towers was an exercise in restraint for the architects, who stopped short of introducing unnecessary decoration to the exterior. Viewed against more conspicuous buildings on the Aldrich Bay reclamation towards Shau Kei Wan, Les Saisons stands out quietly and elegantly, strong enough in its profile that there was no need to fuss over added colour for identity's sake. Tiles clad the





towers while clear glass is used for all windows except the curved, curtain wall-like sections over the seaward-facing master bedrooms, which use tinted glazing and sunshading fins to create feature edges on the main facade.

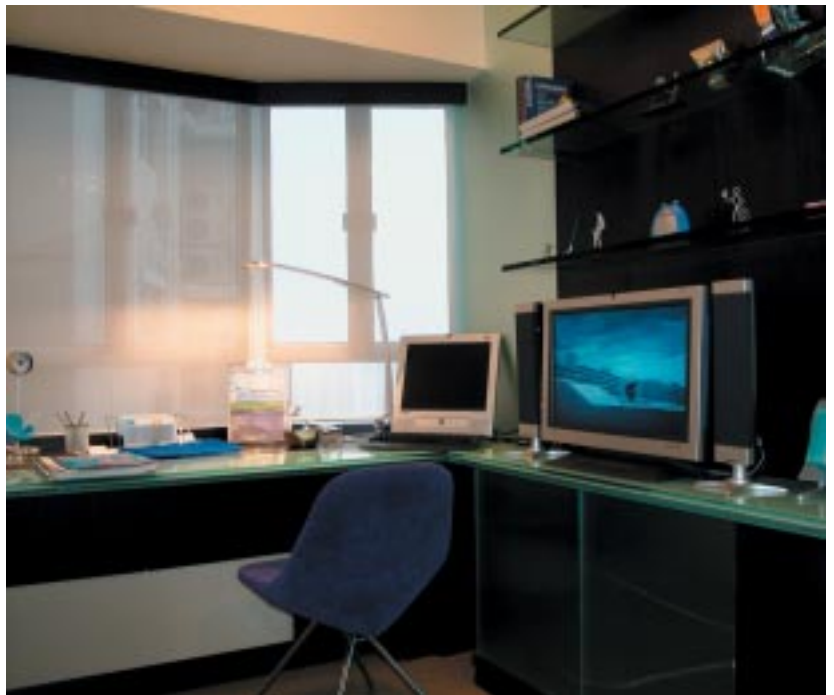
The four towers are elevated on mega-columns that sit partially on top of a three-level podium structure positioned on the seaward half of the



site. This houses the clubhouse, a mezzanine building services floor and carparking/servicing floor. Although the podium pushes to the edge of the site, in response to the client's call for a design sympathetic to the immediate environment pains were taken to soften its apparent mass by treating the facade as a montage of different types and textures of stones. Pergola structures on the edge of the podium deck continue down the facade as a metal screen that practically serves to disguise a wall of louvres. The northern corner was further cut away to expose the shifting tower geometry above and one of a series of mega-columns supporting the towers.

The other southern half of the site is given over to a slightly raised landscaped arrival court, reached from the streets via a gentle ramp approach.

The purpose of the podium design was, however, not to fill the site to its edges. Instead, the design approach for Les Saisons' lower levels was intended to create a transition of spaces from public to semi-public to private.



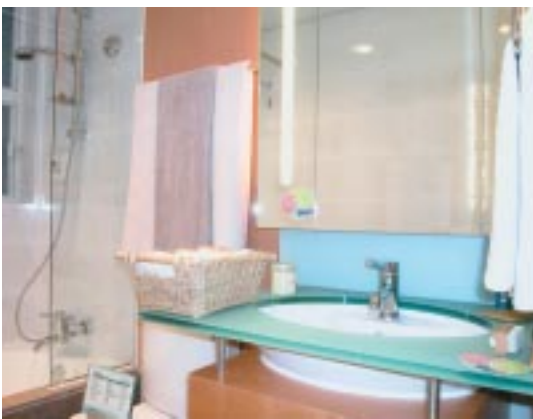


Entering Les Saisons

The most popular approach to the site is from Tai On Street, where Les Saisons presents a welcoming open forecourt. The client requested that no solid fence wall should segregate the development from its environs, to which the architects obliged by designing a slightly raised platform buffered from the street by plantings. The use of a semi-underground basement carpark level allows for a gently inclined ramp to lead to the building entrances while retaining attractive lines of sight for passersby.

Mr Ho also notes that the arrangement simplified basement E&M requirements such as ventilation and cut the overall construction cost by requiring less excavation.







The open space provided on site also complements the positioning of a school on the adjacent site — the curved placement of towers engages with the school building such that both residents and students can enjoy a greater sense of outdoor space.

Residents can be dropped off at their buildings beneath metal canopies before passing aluminium-clad columns into the lobbies, which each feature 12 metres of headroom. The lofty atriums are made possible through clever planning of the levels beneath the tower blocks' transfer plate, as the E&M mezzanine floor at level one could be cut into for added vertical space in lobbies and ground level services areas.

The clubhouse is accommodated on the second floor, as private residents' space away from the relatively open areas below. Indoor facilities include a gymnasium, play areas, multi-purpose rooms and other facilities. Outside, at the same level on the podium deck, are located







a swimming pool, landscaping and further children's play areas.

The towers above contain 864 units ranging in size between 739 and 1,843 sq ft. While units are arranged such that three-bedroom homes face the harbour and two-bedroom apartments face inland, larger-sized duplexes and simplexes are housed at the top of each tower. The total GFA of Les Saisons is 74,320 sq m.

Swire Properties, Sun Hung Kai Properties and China Motor Bus client

Wong Tung & Partners Ltd architect

Dragages et Travaux Publics (HK) Ltd main contractor

Simon Wong Design interior designer



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section