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## THE METICULOUS GEOMETRY OF 212BOX

JOYCE WANG | MKPL ARCHITECTS | LUKE'S OYSTER BAR BY NICHOLAS BURNS ASSOCIATES  
CROWHURST DRIVE HOUSE BY MAKK ARCHITECTS | DERMATOLOGY CLINIC BY FDAT ARCHITECTS

TEXT » ILIYAS ONG  
PHOTOGRAPHY » COURTESY OF A DESIGN FILM FESTIVAL



## DESIGN ON SCREEN

THIS YEAR'S EDITION OF A DESIGN FILM FESTIVAL CELEBRATES THE PROJECTS, PEOPLE AND PHILOSOPHIES THAT TREAD A FINE LINE BETWEEN ART AND DESIGN.

The worlds of art and design will cross orbits in the fourth edition of A Design Film Festival. To be held at Shaw Theatres Lido over two weekends in September, the festival will screen films that rally under the theme of "On a Scale of Art to Design". Expect to discover projects, people and philosophies that occupy the overlap between artistic expression and creative problem solving. Exploring the mutuality – and distinctness – between the two is at the heart of the festival's concerns.

Launched in 2010, A Design Film Festival was the first of its kind in Asia to depart from the exhibition, conference and lecture formats that typified the way design-related content was presented. More than just a curated collection of a dozen films, the festival is propped up to be a platform from which the layperson can better understand the many disciplines of design – from architecture to graphics to products – and those in the industry can collaborate and learn from one another. Although the 2014 edition marks the first time a theme has been established, the idea for it had been germinating in the organisers' minds for years.

"It's quite personal, because we didn't come from design backgrounds," says Felix Ng, co-founder of Anonymous, the design studio responsible for putting the festival series together. Ng majored in journalism while his fellow co-founder Germaine Chong studied film. "To us, we've always practised design as outsiders. And in the

past few years, I've been interested in the question of whether art can be design. Is it possible to be in that middle ground?"

*Designing Art*, a triptych of shorts whose name is a play on the title of Kenya Hara's iconic book, best exemplifies the theme. Each of the shorts focuses on the curious processes of a designer-slash-artist: the sculptor Florentijn Hofman, the collective The Designers Republic, and Shepard Fairey, he of Obey fame. According to Ng, Hofman approaches his sculptures the way a designer would while The Designers Republic's works are meant to provoke rather than communicate. "And what [Fairey] did with the Obama 'Hope' poster was very intentionally not art. He tackled it like a designer working on brand identity."

Ng and Chong reveal that they relied on three sets of criteria when finalising the line up of films: relevance, timeliness (if it tracks industry trends) and entertainment value. "We try to find films that we would pay money to watch," Ng adds. One such movie is *Microtopia*. Billed by Ng as the one film in the festival everyone should watch, the 52-minute documentary investigates the trend of downsizing residences and living 'off-the-grid' as panaceas for social and environmental issues that dog the world today. Given the rapid urbanisation currently underway in many countries, *Microtopia* is a sobering yet essential and timely glimpse into what the future may hold – and how design can change it.

"I hate to categorise our festival under education, but it partially is," laughs Ng. "Design education was the mission; by that I mean how to spread design literacy to non-designers. We've always wanted to make the festival more public and accessible. Then the general public would be more informed to appreciate design. And film is a great medium for that, because you might regard it as entertainment, yet you take something away."

Which is why Ng and Chong regard the festival's newest partner as a "massive" coup: they will be collaborating with Singapore Airlines to screen A Design Film Festival titles on its inflight entertainment system, KrisWorld, from September to December. This promises to take the festival – and its mission to spread design literacy – to an even larger audience.

"It's huge not just for the festival but for the Singaporean design industry, because it shows that big brands such as Singapore Airlines are taking design seriously," says Ng. "I think Singapore Airlines is very progressive with what they're doing with their content, and I hope this means there'll be more platforms for design in the future, not just in Singapore but in the region."

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Log on to [indesignlive.sg](http://indesignlive.sg) for a review of festival film Tadao Ando: From Emptiness to Infinity.

Top Left: A still from *Work, Buy, Consume, Die*, which focuses on The Designer's Republic

Top Right: The 2013 edition of the festival was held at the School of the Arts