

# Green Classrooms:

Tunghai University's Faculty of Music and Fine Arts

Words and photos by Lin Bo-yang  
Translated by S. Ying



*University is a place of freedom and open learning. With this in mind, a college dormitory has the added mission of enhancing this environment and growth by encouraging exchanges of information and relationship-building between students during their college years.*

*Judging the quality of a school's academic offerings and dormitories cannot be simply be made on the basis of the number of classrooms and dorm facilities. Instead, Tunghai University's Faculty of Music and Fine Arts offers a special environment that uses its architecture to enhance learning by providing visual elements that nurture artistic creation and performing arts on campus while at the same time itself serving as a work of art in a space that teaches art.*

## Writer Profile

### Lin Bo-yang



Lin Po-yang was born in Yilan. He studied architecture in Taichung as an undergraduate and worked as a professional architect for years before he began lecturing on architecture in the same city. He is a passionate architect and designer who explores every possibility with relentless effort. Paying special attention to the public-ownership nature of architecture and arguing against individual ownership over it, he hopes to create good public spaces and elevate the quality of residents' real living and aesthetics.

Lin was nominated for the ADA Awards for Emerging Architect in 2014, and is now in charge of Fieldveo Design. He's also a part-time lecturer at the National Taiwan University of Science and Technology's Department of Architecture.



The building appears to be encased by the earth with this curved grass wall design that connects to the lawn.

At first glance, one might be attracted by the exterior design here, featuring a large open green space where the grassy expanse seems infinite regardless of which corner you are standing or your angle of vision. The most unique design element is the courtyard between the two buildings, which allows the structures to direct themselves upwards like two arrows pointing in separate directions, connected by a narrow air bridge. The visual effect is filled with contrasts while retaining a coordinated and connected appearance.

## Design concept based on functional use

In the 21st century, contemporary architecture concepts have incorporated the philosophy of American architect Louis Sullivan to create forms that follow function and eliminate extra design elements to restore structures to their basic essence. Using this concept, the space and window areas are designed to ensure maximum performance, with functional rooms that block out noise for piano practicing and the elimination the use of pillars with smart placement of window space to ensure good acoustics. Art classrooms

also need to be well-illuminated spaces so there are large windows to ensure a good, functional environment for creating artworks. How does the architect promote creativity while also creating functional designs for these buildings?

## Flowing space and visual effects

The key lies in the use of structural spaces to create special design elements that have "box" and "surface" visual effects. Architectural techniques are applied where architect Yang Chia-Kai created illusions between actual and virtual space within the buildings so there is a strong visual connectivity between the box and lines of the interior walls, allowing an visual extension of the space and creating a flowing effect.

In addition, in order to ensure a smooth flow of walkers in hallways, and good air circulation and lighting in each classroom, the design has a hallway on one side of the classroom with special thought put into the design of this corridor that allows "connecting points" (see terminology) where classmates can stop to engage with each other and exchange information, as architect Yang realizes the importance within college education of developing social

networking skills, friendship and relationships. This design also allows the education process to transcend classroom walls as it encourages students to extend their learning environment from indoors to semi-outdoor areas while offering a space to display their creativity by showcasing artworks.

### A green building coexisting with the environment

The building has an east-west alignment and the windows are mostly situated to open to the south and north, while stairs are placed on the the east and west sides in order to avoid the hot sun. There are lots of green space and many trees between the two buildings with the open courtyard design creating a comfortable space within the structure and to expressing respect for the environment, thereby showcasing the spirit of this architectural design that allows the building to co-exist with the surrounding environment and grow with it.

In addition, the color scheme for the entire structure is subtle or nude earth tones, incorporating water-mixed cement, grass, bricks and stones in its design with special Chinese fonts noting the Faculty of Music and Fine Arts on the main wall, plus red bricks that symbolize the unique red earth only found on Dadu Mountain. These materials are filled with encouragement to embrace nature as one can sense the light breezes, natural sunlight and nurturing rain among the buildings.

Structurally, the huge wall connected to the grass shows the strong bond between the earth and two buildings, serving to extends the green area visually while softening connection between the concrete building and natural elements. Architect Yang also stresses that the growth of green vines, grass and trees will not affect the building structure as they occur naturally, eventually giving the architecture the appearance of having two green waves from a birds' eye view as vines continue to grow and encase the sides of the building. This intelligent design technique creates a softening

approach where there are no clear boundaries between the buildings and green lawn, and there are no clear entries or exits within this environment, forming an open space that symbolizes open learning and open-ended interpretations in art and education. This is also a very intellectual way of presenting an interesting form of artistic creation where one waits for art to "appear or happen".

### Saluting Luce Memorial Chapel

Tunghai University's campus is filled with culture and history, with Luce Memorial Chapel being a landmark building and central focal point. Completed in 1963, it was the first church constructed with Modernist architecture in central Taiwan, with its famous flying swallow design created by architects Chen Qi-Kuan and I.M. Pei. This well-known structure features two slanting sides of the chapel as "wings" and has long been a popular central Taiwan landmark and attraction as it continues to impress visitors with the visually pleasing effects, which include a tent-like conoid structure with warped sides rising high towards the sky in a structured manner that emphasizes the diamond tiles and illustrates the concept that beauty can be exemplified in numbers.


The Faculty of Music and Fine Arts was also designed to be similar to Luce Memorial Chapel by replicating the visual "two wings" effect while replacing the diamond-shaped tiles used in the chapel with containers for growing grass. There are diamond-shaped windows on the west side of the building, along the corridors to block out sun while still allowing plenty of natural light in. The use of the diamond shape as a design element is meant to echo an important visual element which symbolizes Tunghai University's campus grounds.

What is learning? What are the elements for a good learning environment? How are kindergarten and college educational spaces similar or different? What hardware needs to be incorporated within the architecture of a



Structural elements such as pillars and poles are placed outside of the box-shaped exterior.

building in order to uphold the social responsibility of education? These are questions that an architect must answer to design for different requirements of the learning environments.

As an incubator for higher education, the environment must stimulate creativity and facilitate learning. This is especially true for the Faculty of Music and Fine Arts, which requires plenty of imagination and creativity in the fostering of the arts and musical performances that will evoke emotion. Architect Yang has created a structure that embeds virtual notes of music in a flowing space to integrate both art and music, while exemplifying the philosophy of art into the design, underlining the idea that every artwork created is a masterpiece. 



The wall is made up small diamond shapes.

### Tunghai University Faculty of Music and Fine Arts

**Location:** 1727, Taiwan Blvd., Sec. 4, Xitun Dist.

**Open since** January 1, 2008

**Architect:** Chia-Kai Yang of Arctangent Architecture+Design

**Design Specialty:** An architectural work that creates a contextual existence with the environment that shows respect to the Luce Memorial Chapel while creating open flowing space on campus.

### Terminology

**Context:** Environment around the structure that creates a contextual connection between the land, culture and people within the architecture.

**Connecting Space:** Points between sides and lines that create space for pausing and connecting