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CHANGSHU JINMAO SALES CENTRE

AEDAS

BAO'AN CULTURAL DISTRICT
PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE
ROCCO DESIGN ARCHITECTS ASSOCIATES

THE ARCHITECTURE OF
MALAYSIA'S UNIVERSITIES

IS THE INTERIOR DESIGN
INDUSTRY MERELY SURVIVING?



THE NEXT LAP

THE INTERIOR DESIGN INDUSTRY IS SURVIVING AND NOT THRIVING. CAN THIS BE TRUE?

WORDS
LOW SHI PING

EDITOR'S NOTE

This is the first in a six-month-long collaboration we are doing with the Interior Design Confederation Singapore to examine how the industry can up its game.



Ask Amy Picanco to write a report card on the state of the interior design industry and she enthusiastically gives it an “A” for effort.

That is all she grades though, because the Founder and Design Director of Aym Design knows that there is still a long way to go before it levels up across the board.

“We continue to exist but are struggling,” Picanco says, speaking not just as a

practitioner but as an executive council member of the Interior Design Confederation of Singapore (IDCS).

“The market is often misunderstood and potential clients are not clear about the services interior designers can provide and the value that this will bring to a space.”

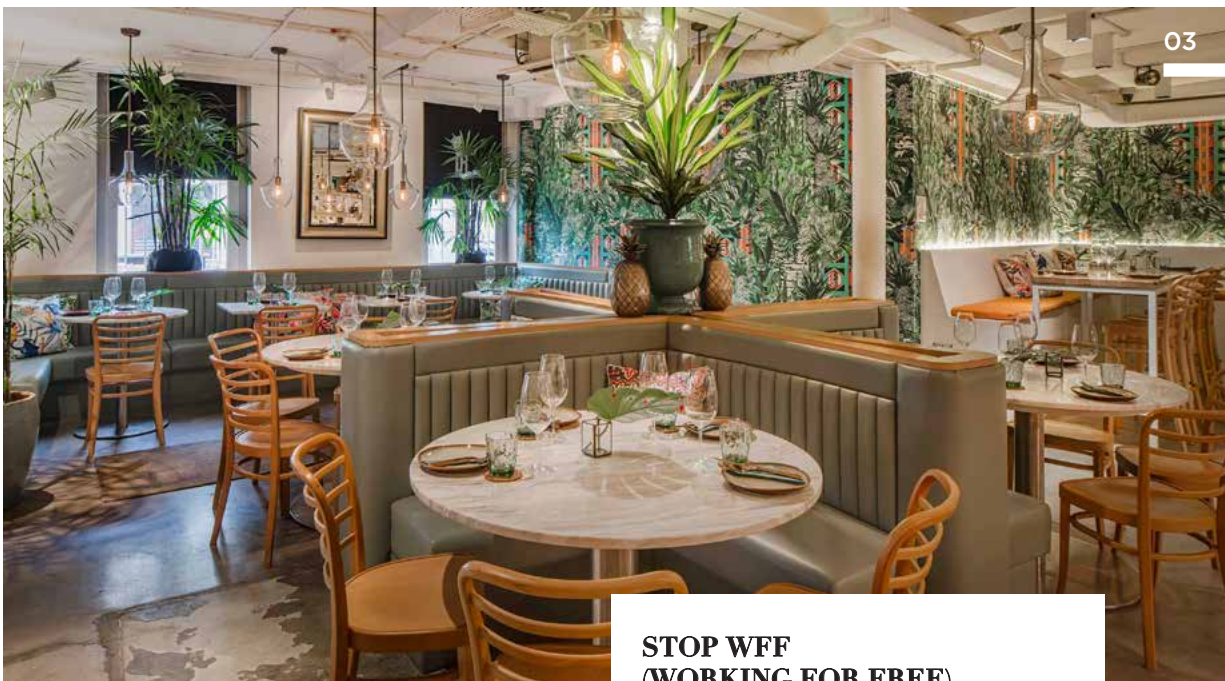
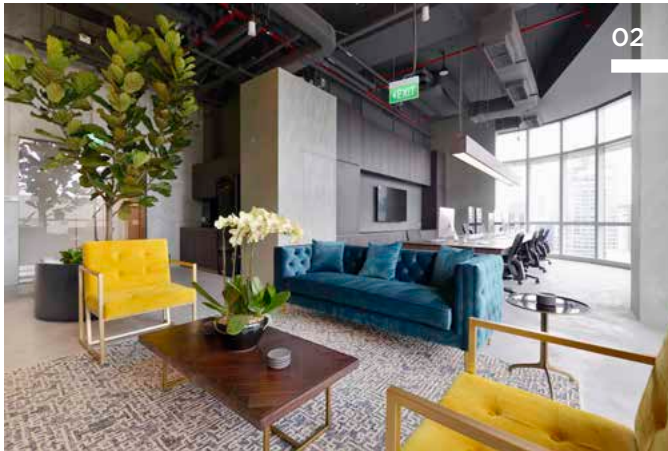
She is not alone in having this sentiment.

Steven Shaw, Executive Principal – Singapore at Aedas, is equally concerned,

01-03.
Projects by
Aym Design
(left to right):
Miss Fitz,
Select Metals
and Don Ho.



AMY PICANCO,
FOUNDER AND DESIGN DIRECTOR,
AYM DESIGN



**STOP WFF
(WORKING FOR FREE)**

“There is no growth and everyone is just ‘hanging on’ due to COVID-19 and the disruption it has had on the world.

“The industry is at a critical junction that has been brought about by the convergence of many things: the pandemic, working from home, digitisation and changing attitudes of our clients in terms of how space is used and how much is required.

“It’s been a tough two years.”

Nonetheless, Shaw believes the future is looking brighter and that the corner has been turned.

Key to keeping up this trajectory is the acknowledgement that the way the interior design industry works needs to change.

The biggest issue confronting it is pricing, he points out.

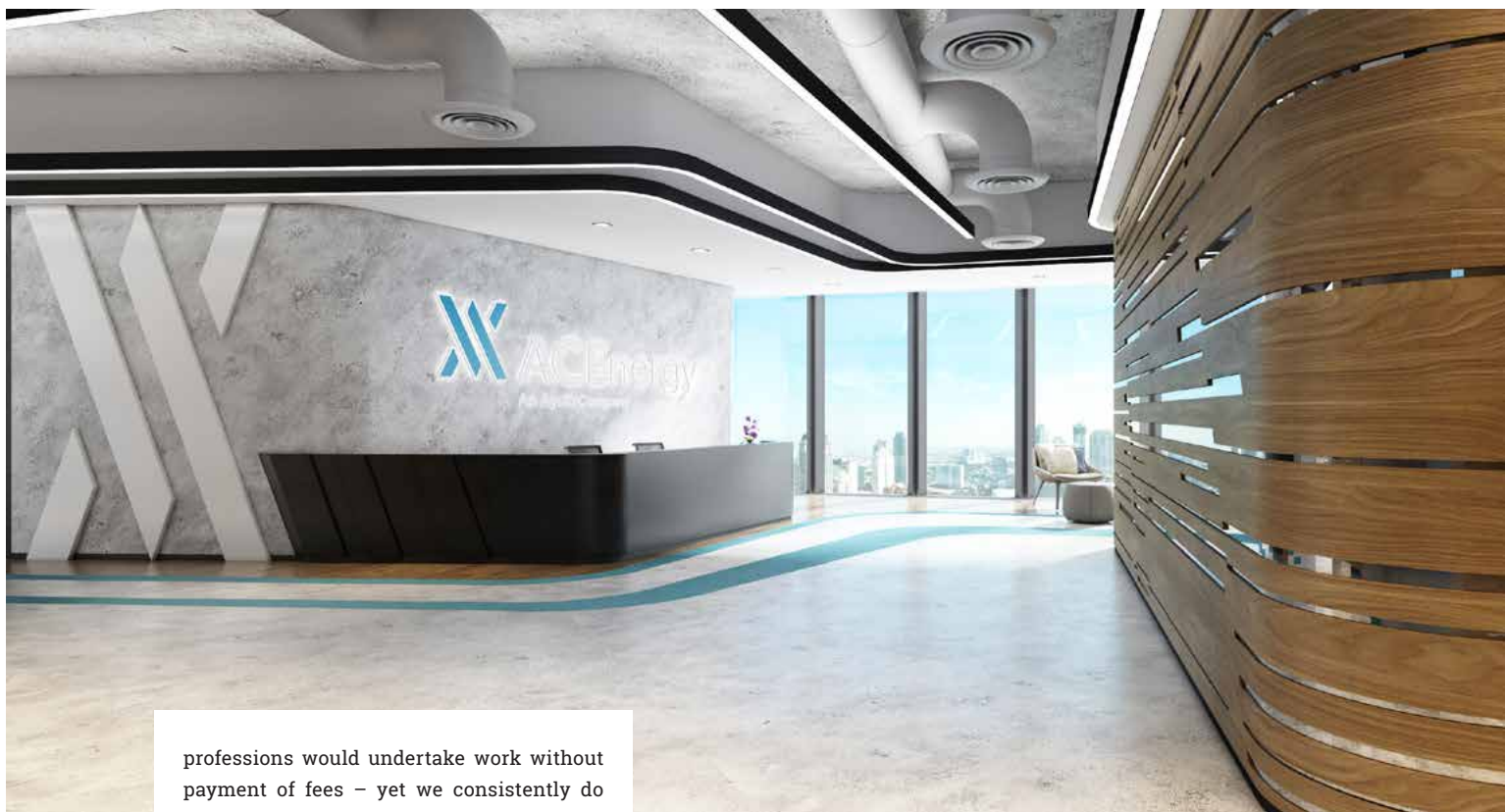
“If we consider ourselves professionals, like lawyers, doctors and accountants, we should recognise that none of those



Scan the QR code to read a story about the #NoFreeDesignMovement on our website.



STEVEN SHAW,
EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL,
AEDAS



professions would undertake work without payment of fees – yet we consistently do free work and under-price the actual cost of our services.

“To survive and reinvest in our future, we need this practice to stop,” he says, speaking from a vantage point of having worked as an architect and interior designer for four decades around the world.

Picanco agrees, “We all need to agree on pricing and terms of business in order to regulate the industry as professionals and make sure we are not undervaluing ourselves.

“We have to say no to free design and make sure the public is informed properly about the services and level of work involved in creating an outstanding space.”

Elaborating on her point, Shaw adds, “We need to educate everyone on what we as an industry can offer and how we enhance people’s lives through the spaces we create; also, cheapest is not always the best.”

On its part, the industry should ensure



04



05



06

its fees are commensurate with the time and experience required to undertake the project.

Designers should also be willing to evolve in how they deliver their services, while also supporting the upskilling of its networks of suppliers and service providers.

THE BANE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

A major stumbling block to achieving this is the media – specifically, social media, “design it yourself” tools and quick-turnaround reality TV shows like “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition”.

“Spending time looking at Instagram and Pinterest is great for idea generation, but can often lead clients to underestimate the amount of technical skills that go into putting together a well-functioning and beautiful space,” explains Picanco.

“Designers have to carefully plan around

existing structures and consider all the M&E functions before any aesthetic detailing is started.”

Cherin Tan, Principal and Creative Director of LAANK, presents another perspective on how the industry is not leveraging the full potential of social media as a communications and promotion tool.

“I think nearly 80 percent of professional interior designers are active on social media.

“Yet, among them, only a small percentage feel that social media has been effective in promoting their business,” she says.

On the flip side, eight out of 10 new clients she meets use social media to look for interior designers – and many share with her that the ones they meet over-promise and under-deliver.

“It is critical to focus not just on ‘being out there’, but being in the right place, at the right time, and in the right way that attracts the

04-06. Projects managed by Shaw at Aedas (left to right): AC Energy, Dyson and Huawei DigiX Lab.