

# Experimental Arena of Architecture Design Creation:

Research to the Urban Sample Housing Project in Taiwan

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## Abstract

Publicity, packaging and advertising promotion are the most popular ways of commodity marketing. While in the home sales industry, due to the large amount of money involved, the focus is more on the marketing strategies. Taiwan's home sales sector, however, has developed its own sales mode - pre-sales (advance sale), i.e., sale before build. Arising out of this unique system, there comes two provisional buildings called the "Reception Center" and "Sample House," functioning as a venue for showcasing, reception, negotiation, and transaction. Most of the reception centers and sample houses are located either at the construction site or at a nearby vacant land, and are usually dismantled after 3~6 months. The characteristics of such building have caused it to be the shortest lived among all architects in Taiwan. To attract the potential buyers, the sales agent would try everything to make it look as magnificent and eye-catching as possible. Some even go to the extent as inviting well-known designer at high payment. Its innovative outlook and modeling have created a strikingly marvelous landscape throughout the island. Over the years, some of the masterpieces even stood out as big award winners in numerous contests held in East Asia area. Not to mention a separate category especially set up for this provisional building has been included in many designing contests organized by local non-governmental groups. Targeting the sales reception center in urban cities, and by employing case analysis, this study intends to explore its influence on interior design sector, through elaborating on its developmental process, and the socio-economic relationship. Findings of this study found that the reception center and sample house have become the optimal experimental site for designers to play out their originality because of its unique functionality, less regulatory restrictions, and by providing a free space where designers can make full play of their imaginations. Furthermore, it has become the hotbed for fostering top-grade talents, and a racing ground for matured designers. As a result, it has driven the domestic interior design sector to a new height, enriched the island's cityscape, and has become the most creative and representative provisional building that has dealt the strongest impact on the city aesthetics.

***Keywords: Architecture design, Reception center, Sample house, Real estate, Temporary buildings***

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Motive and purpose of study

During the booming economy times, the prosperity of all businesses, the housing real estate is the "main locomotive of economics". In other words, the housing real estate has many related industries and types of works<sup>1</sup>, in this case, the housing real estate can be the lead of economic development. When the housing real estate business is in booming prosperity, housing reception centers start to appear fast and continuously, completed within 15-30 days<sup>a</sup>. These reception centers are built with different appearances and unique shapes. The surrounding landscape ties in with the landscape designs, for example: plants, fountains, green space and others. The lighting design is even more dazzling during evening times, always attracting people's attention regardless where the housing reception center stands, either by the road or in the corner or street. However, these architectures and landscapes will be removed in the next three to six months<sup>b</sup>, forming the most typical, most dazzling and the most short-living temporary constructions of Taiwan.

The emergence of housing reception centers and the sample housing are related to Taiwan's housing pre-sale system. "Taiwan developed a unique system of housing real estate pre-selling since the 1970s, pre-selling buildings that are still under planning or constructing. The housing reception centers and the subsequent samples of the buildings are the sites and tools of housing pre-sale. The system of housing pre-sale of housing real estate opened up the economic miracle of Taiwan, the housing reception centers and the sample houses even affected the appearance of the cities and stimulated the development of interior design in Taiwan, which created the modern look of Taiwan today. " [15]

For its unique appearance and the beautified overall environment, the housing reception centers are often the "Pearl of the city", no doubt being a great contrast to the old-fashioned concrete buildings. It also caused a tremendous impact to the construction of urban landscape. Designers engaged in the housing reception centers and the sample houses are mostly interior designers. Besides designing the reception centers and sample houses, they are also responsible for the appearance of the region and the base design. On account of the huge amount of housing real estate sales, there are more marketing budgets for advertising. As for the high-priced, so-called "luxury houses", the housing reception center even hire famous designers to plan and design, the main purpose is to interest the visitors and make them purchase the houses. Professional design magazines often report on such works. If there was an outstanding design, it would be transformed and used within the industry, achieving the purpose of exchanging ideas, also affecting the trend of designs.

To sum up, in addition to the discussing of housing reception centers and the sample houses, we would like to explore the impact that it has on interior designing, so we put forward the following research topics:

1. To explore the development of housing reception centers and sample houses and the topics related to designing.
2. What is the impact of housing reception center on interior design and what is its impact factor?
3. What is the relationship between housing reception centers and the urban landscapes?

## **1.2 Noun Commentary**

Since some nouns in different professions will have different interpretations of the meaning and representation, therefore it is necessary to make clear.

- a. Housing reception Center: A "reception center" can be set up in any industries to take care of customers. In this article it refers specifically to the "house selling" behavior, which is defined as follows: "Temporary structures for the purposes of sales of housing projects. It has the purpose of displaying the pre-sale information and is also a place to negotiate the sales of the businesses" [1]
- b. sample house: " The sample houses are wooden architectures built temporally according to the design graph. Through fixing up, decoration, beautification, providing house purchasers to take a look. " [1] The characteristic of the sample housing is that the sample houses will be removed once after the houses are sold out.
- c. Housing real estate products: "Upon completion of renovation of buildings, layout, landscaping work for homebuyers to see. It refers to the completion of permanent housing. " [1]The greatest difference between sample houses and real houses is that the samples of the houses are temporary structures, so they take note on only the surface form of beautification, not the actual function. Real houses are entirely real wood materials and to be of practical function.

## **1.3 Research Methods**

Since the housing reception centers and the sample houses are temporary housing constructions, they exist only for a short while. They are usually regarded as subsidiary works and people often don't pay much attention on them and that is why few people discuss about it professionally in the past. In these few, there is only a more extensive discussion from National Taiwan University Master's thesis, written by S.Y.Duh, "Ghost housing landscape in the city ---- On the pre-sale system for Taiwan under the housing reception centers and the sample houses". Another thesis written by Chang, Kuo-liang for materials, " Decoration material recycling research: Using housing reception center as an example", the other articles were reported based on designs of a single work or were general introductory articles. Very few discuss the subject of relationship between the housing reception centers and interior design, also the impact it causes on interior design. Therefore, this article is going to discuss of the above as a start.

The method used in this article for the research is to analyze the examples, tying in with the interviews and text analysis. The targets of the interviews are three interior designers and two people in charge of the construction unit, discussing from different points of views. The examples are taken from articles of professional design magazines such as the interior design magazines and the contemporary design magazines. These two magazines are highly rated in the design world and often report of the housing reception centers, that were published within the past two years.

## **2. The background of housing reception centers and sample houses**

### **2.1 The origin of housing reception centers and sample houses**

In order to sell houses, Taiwan developed a unique "housing pre-sale" system in 1970s, to sell before building the houses. Such a system has the following benefits: Buyers have lesser pressure on paying and for

those who sell houses, they increase customers and sales. Through the pre-sale system, the payment deadline for buying these units would be more abundant, because customers only have to pay about 10% self-payments in the beginning, the rest of the payment can be paid according to the construction progress. They don't have to pay the bank loans before the completion of the houses. Since it does not require a large amount of funding in a short time, it is more acceptable by the general population that don't have surplus incomes. In this case, the housing capacity can be increased, in favor of the seller. However, the pre-sale system also has its shortcomings. Since it is bought before completed, the construction quality can not be guaranteed. If the systems of the construction companies are not that sturdy or those with poor financial resources sometimes collapse, housing would be completed in the foreseeable future, the fees paid by homebuyers often come to naught.

In response to the pre-sale system and the convenience of housing sales, housing reception centers were gradually produced. Since the customers do not necessarily understand the layout plan, nor feel how big the spaces area, in order to allow visitors to experience the real situation and to facilitate the description, "Sample Rooms" also emerged. Sample houses are temporary buildings in line with the housing sales, designed and built with the actual situation of the whole space, but not necessarily with the actual function of the furniture. All the temporary buildings are removed at the end of the sale. There is also something known as the "real house", building after the completion of the actual work with a real function. It is demonstrated and may be sold to customers together right away. Sample houses or real houses, are usually attached to a housing reception center, but not all sample houses are set up in a housing reception center. Since the housing reception centers and sample houses come in different types of design, they become strong visual impacts in the city. As a large number of interior designers participate in the designing of these reception centers and sample houses, they stimulate the development of the interior design.

## **2.2 Space allocation of housing reception centers and sample houses**

With the display of housing reception centers, reception, sales, negotiation and demonstration of a variety of unique styles and features are done. Bigger housing reception centers will have the following spaces: the outdoor landscape, parking spaces, the entrance, the foyer, the parlor, the sell control area, the counter area, the negotiation areas, the VIP rooms, the conference rooms, the model exhibition area, the building materials display areas, the pantries, toilets and the storage room. Small reception centers with limited spaces only allocate basic facilities, for example, the counter area and discuss the district, the model display area, the display area and the building materials display area. The scheme and the allocation entirely depend on the planning needs and costs.

The spatial planning of sample houses accord to the architectural design plans. A "double bathroom with three rooms and two living rooms" house as an example, it includes the following spaces: the entrance, the living room, the dining room, the kitchen, three bedrooms and two bathrooms. To demonstrate the effect of three different bedrooms, they are regularly planned for different use of people, for example, one of which will be the main bedroom, a room for the children while the other may be planned as a study room or a guest room or a room for the elders. The larger housing cases sometimes set up two to three sample houses to show a different pattern and style of the content. The housing reception center and the sample houses are often connected with corridors or entrance halls.

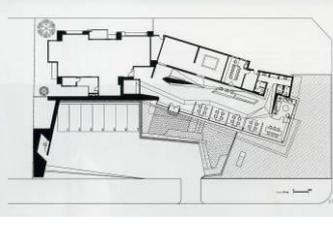
		
<p>(Fig1.1) The living room design in the sample houses (data source: [2] )</p>	<p>(Fig1.2) Plan(data source: [7] )</p>	<p>(Fig1.3) Model exhibit area (data source: [8] )</p>
		
<p>(Fig1.4) Model exhibit (data source: photo by writer)</p>	<p>(Fig1.5) The counter area in the reception centers. (data source: photo by writer)</p>	<p>(Fig1.6) The study room design in the sample houses(data source: photo by writer)</p>

Fig1:Space allocation of housing reception centers and sample houses

### 2.3 Materials used on housing reception centers and sample houses

Since the housing reception centers and the sample houses are just temporary housing constructions and are to be removed after the use of purpose, the materials used are ordinary. They use materials such as the “lauan” (柳安) for the structure, plywood for the wall-coat, waved metal for the roof, wood for the floor board. Paint is used for the outdoor wall, wall paper for the interior wall. Constructions of these materials are faster and cost less. However, with the development of housing real estate, luxury houses began to emerge and demonstrate high-level sense of nobility, the material used on housing reception centers and sample houses have also upgraded. For example, the housing reception center with the improvement of the overall height, with the increasing of space, with steel beams and columns. For the interior decoration, real materials are used, such as marble floors, imported tile bathroom, senior wallpaper are paste, top-leveled bathroom and kitchen facilities are used. The samples houses come in the original size, so that visitors can actually experience the space. Changes in the above mentioned materials, the most important part is the decorative surface materials. From the early times the materials "exist" to the latest request "good". Due to the recent jump in housing prices, senior luxury start to appear and decoration materials must not only be good but have to be "senior, scarce, of good texture," which designers at the same time test their the skills.

		
(Fig2.1) The lobby in the sample houses: marble used on the wall and the floor (data source: photo by writer)	(Fig2.2) Wooden floor(data source: [6] )	(Fig2.3) Wall paper on the wall (data source: photo by writer)
		
(Fig2.4) Glass bricks(data source: [10] )	(Fig2.5) Carpet on the floor (data source: [14] )	(Fig2.6) Ceramic tile used in the bathroom of the sample houses, simulation of the real situation after the completion. (data source: photo by writer)

Fig 2 : Materials used on housing reception centers and sample houses

## 2.4 The shape and style of housing reception centers

In order to attract buyers, the housing reception centers appearance often has an outstanding design. Various architectural style have appeared, such as simple shapes, classic styles, geometric modeling, Baroque styles, the Roman styles, Chinese traditional courtyard styles, etc. Just like during the old days when Taiwan was ruled by Japan and became a place for Japanese architectural experiment. During Japanese colonial period in Taiwan, there were constructions of different styles of institution building, public buildings and residences, has been retained to form special "exotic style", for example, Japanese architect Moriyama Matsunosuke(森山松之助) designed Taichung City Government, Government House, the public sale of Bureau, Tainan State Hall (now the Museum of Taiwan Literature), Taipei Office of the State. Kondo Juro(近藤十郎) designed at National Taiwan University Hospital. Ichiro Nomura designed Chongqing South Road, Taipei street house, Springfield Shrine (春田直信)Taoyuan(桃園) Japanese temple design and so on. [3-5]No matter in what form, its purpose is to attract customers and highlight themselves. The following principles for decision of the appearance are found from the research: (1). To capture the elements of the building design: Since the set up of the reception centers are usually after the accomplishments of the architectural designs, in order to echo the building after the completion, they capture part of the construction elements and use it in the reception Center appearance. (2) In accordance with specific demands or purpose: for example, to highlight the value of a sense of elegance with the use of classical elements. In order to highlight the sense of leisure, nature elements are integrated. (3). Designers play their part: not considering the style, characteristics, no interference by the owners, interior designers are completely free to play their part. Under these conditions, Since there are spaces for creativity, works are designed and rewarded in the local area and overseas<sup>c</sup>.

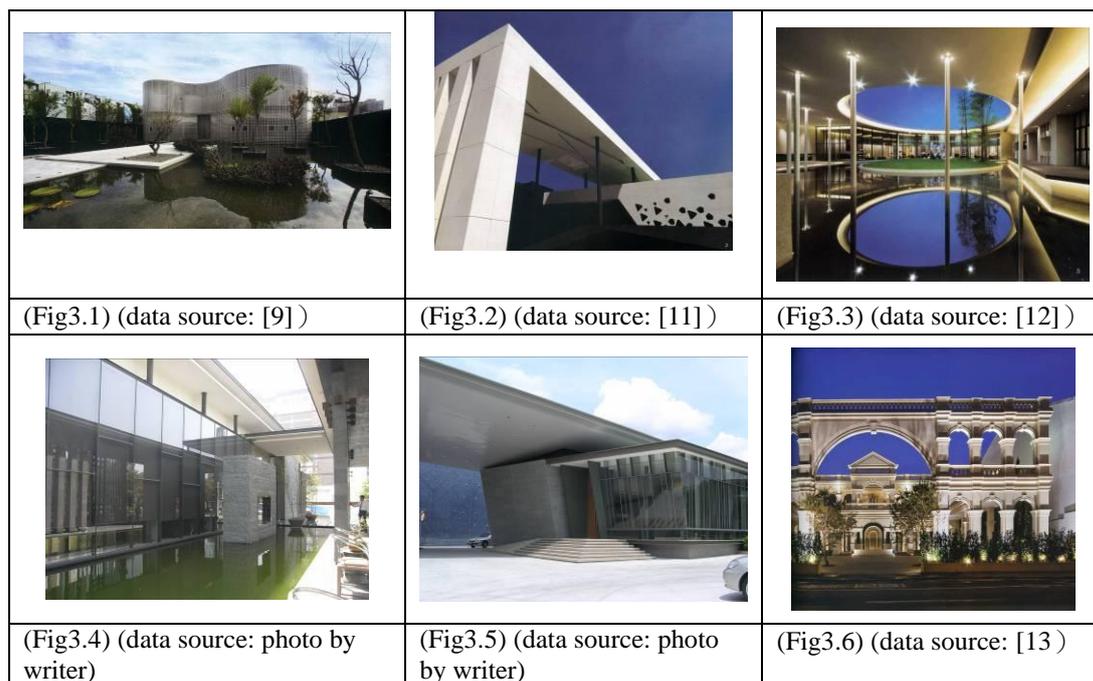


Fig 3 : The shape and style of housing reception centers

**Table 1. Photo description:**

Content Photo	Designer	category	Location	Building Size	Main Materials
(Fig1.1)	Su,Ching-Chi (蘇靜麒)	Sample house	Taichung City	198 m <sup>2</sup>	Stone 、 Painted Glass 、 polished granite tile 、 Veneer staining
(Fig1.2) (Fig1.3)	Guo,shiu-Yuan (郭旭原) & Hwang,Huey-Meei(黃惠美)	Reception center	Taipei	500 m <sup>2</sup>	Zebra-stripe wood 、 Stone 、 Glass 、 Cement board 、 Black Mirro 、 rice-pebble surface treatment 、
(Fig2.2)	Thomas Wang (王玉麟)	Reception center	Taipei	605 m <sup>2</sup>	Stone, wood, metal, paint
(Fig2.4) (Fig3.1)	Gong,Shu-Chang(龔書章)	Reception center	Taichung City	590 m <sup>2</sup>	Glass brick 、 Paper Tube 、 Charcoal 、 Metal
(Fig2.5) (Fig3.6)	Zin-Chun Tan (譚精忠)	Reception center	Taipei	911 m <sup>2</sup>	Sandstone Paint 、 Carpet Stainless steel paint 、 Veneer staining 、 Painting 、 Mirror 、 Steel brush wood flooring
(Fig3.2)	Thomas Wang (王玉麟)	Reception center	Taipei	1155 m <sup>2</sup>	Stone 、 Veneer 、 Paint 、 black 、 Laser hollow iron 、 Mirror 、 Wood Floor 、 Carpet

(Fig3.3)	Zin-Chun Tan (譚精忠)	Reception center	Taipei	1042 m <sup>2</sup>	Sandstone Paint · Carpet · polished granite · Nanyang ironwood · Wallpaper
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## 2.5 Principles of housing reception centers location

Constructing housing reception centers follows the following location principles: On the construction base they rent a open space in the vicinity, or elect an eye-catching location with more cars. After completing the structure, the reception centers are usually on the first floor, as a place to negotiate with the clients. If the construction is in the base, its advantage is that the construction and the reception center is at the same location, so it is convenient to explain to the customers in the current situation. If the reception center is rent near the base, it is usually due to cross-marketing period for the construction period, or the base still has other things to be processed. If the construction of the location of the base is less eye-catching, or in order to attract buyers, sometimes people would choose a more eye-catching site, such as a corner of heavy traffic or next to the road in the open space. Although it is less convenient with the reception center and the base far away, but eye-catching locations between vehicles and more customers can increase the number of visitors.

In addition, there are exceptional circumstances: Double reception centers set up, the case of home sales with a set of two reception centers, the so-called "inner reception" and "outside reception", this often occurs when the construction of the case is away from the city or difficult to find. Two reception centers would be set up, one located at the base, the other at the crowded place.

## 2.6 The Feng shui (風水) concept and taboos of the constructions of the housing reception centers

In the Chinese world, feng shui (風水) is a great deal of importance for the architecture and housing real estate sector in particular, even more, although the reception centers are temporary buildings, the importance of the basic taboos and feng shui are still of great importance. The construction of reception centers are focused on two main points: 1. The location of the main entrance and the taboos. 2. The date and time of the start of construction. The first related to the gate of the selected buildings are usually set by the geomancers, the taboo is, when looking from inside, there shouldn't be any misfortunes outside on a straight line, for example, corners, telephone poles. As for the second, the date and time is also selected and set by the geomancers. Relevant people are only responsible to hold the ceremony. If the owners don't mind these taboos and hold no formal ceremony for the sake of construction works smoothly, sometimes a simple ceremony on its own, to seek peace of mind at the same time is also acceptable.

## 3. The impact of housing reception centers on interior design

### 3.1 Bring up well-known interior designers:

At present, the vast majority designers of the reception centers are interior designers, according to an interview, for the early construction of the reception centers, the owners provided the drawings or photographs directly to woodworking facilities. Only for bigger works or to be particular, owners look up for interior designs for the whole design. Recently standards and requirements of customers have improved and the levels of the

housing sales have upgraded. In order to shape the image and the value of sensibility, well-known designers or designers returned from abroad are invited without any sparing of expenses. "The designs of the reception centers employ the most advanced designers, some owners favor new horizons returned from abroad, for they have the latest Western aesthetic taste and the courage to use the most exotic material, with the experimental spirit of overcoming difficulties and having the ability." [15] After seeing the sample houses, customers will often appoint the original designer to cooperation with. In this way, many well-known interior designers are created.

### **3.2 Leading the trend of interior design:**

Since most clients are not professional enough to read the designs, nor able to experience how the complete construction would be, the construction companies build beautiful sample houses, deliberately beautified by the designers, so that the clients often get moved, so sample houses are very important marketing tools for housing real estates. Scene photos are often used in advertising sales in order to attract customers, also increasing the exposure of the constructions. At the same time, well-known designers in order to improve the reputé of themselves, publish their work through the media. In this way, many new ideas and new concepts spread out to the public. If the customers and the general public like the ideas, a population will be aroused.

### **3.3 The creative stage for interior designers**

The housing reception centers and sample houses emphasize on attracting the customer's sight and to create a whole atmosphere. As long as the designer can cooperate with the budget and marketing strategy of the company, he can take charge in the whole design. Since it is a temporary building, although there are relevant laws and regulations, the restrictions do not seem too harsh, so designers have more space to show creativity. For the above reasons, there are often excellent designs.

### **3.4 Impact of the housing reception centers on the scenery**

Housing reception centers, as a result of fewer restrictions and regulations, designers play a larger space. The temporary buildings form a unique base in the region and the surrounding landscaping. Therefore the housing reception centers and sample houses enriched and beautified the city, but at the same time bring out the vulgar style of early architecture and design.

## **4. Conclusion**

As previously discussed, the contents of housing reception center and sample houses in the economic and the social face, we can see that the reception center is a result of the "pre-sale" system, which is issued by the uniqueness of Taiwan's development of housing real estate process. The interior designer is one of them, not only for the interior design work, the outer appearance, but also of the creative and innovative design results. Designers are also happy to publish their unique works and designs. Through the power of media, works are viewed by other professional designers and ideas are met and exchanged, and sometimes lead to a design trend. From the observation of study findings are as follows: The design and construction of housing reception centers and sample houses can enhance the standard of interior design, several factors of the affections are as follows:

- a. The participant of new arisen designers back from abroad: Large number of students came back on the real estate boom, bringing back the latest design concepts, integrating foreign culture into designs, completing an amazing work.
- b. The power of the media: Professional magazines report a large number of such design works, so that the design industry and the readers can keep in touch with the latest information, and thus bring the latest trends.
- c. designers have a larger space to play: the case of such designs are usually only a matter of principles of the owner's instructions. Sometimes the whole authority of decision is on the designer. The less restrictive they have, the greater space the design has to play. It can be seen as a testing ground for creative designers and also an arena for the designers.
- d. The exhibition of designers organized: Inviting a number of well-known designers to compete, known as the Interior Design Show. Though it is one of advertising practices, but off topic, the purpose of attracting people is achieved. Since many people and designers are participating, the purpose of exchanging is achieved.

Due to the reception center, experimental designs often emerge. A variety of styles and shapes in the appearance of distinctive characteristics even though it exists for only a short while, the emergence of a rich housing reception center can improve the environment and view of the city. It has a positive effect on urban scenery. It can not be ignored and at the same time we can ask ourselves what is the ideal urban landscape and living space.

### **Acknowledgment**

Gratitude will be extended to anonymous review committee members for the suggestion in the paper so that more complete viewpoints can be manifested in this research.

### **Notes**

- a. From the interview of the construction unit, 100 m<sup>2</sup> of the reception center can be completed in about 15 days, if there are sample houses, the days will increase about 10 days. If the construction area is more than 400 m<sup>2</sup>, it will take up to 30 days. But the length of construction period still varies in each case.
- b. The use of duration and location of reception centers, the construction start date, the rent, the sales, the marketing state, some for more than a year, but generally in three to six months.
- c. Taiwan's interior designers Thomas Wang , Gong, Shu -Chang gained awards for designing housing reception centers. It was the award of Japan and the Republic of China JCD Design Interior Design Association (CSID) held by the design of gold, also because the design is of a high standard, with special and has impact on design trends, CSID in particular added the contest of "housing reception centers".

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