



Understanding our Built Heritage

"Knowing the style of a heritage building won't tell you much; knowing the socio-cultural reasons that gave rise to the style will give you a better understanding of the building's heritage – why it was built the way it is."

Quotable quote from Hoyin

Understanding our Built Heritage

People tend to think of "colonial architecture" as buildings designed to a certain aesthetic appearance – usually those designed before the onset of Modernism as a global architectural trend after World War II.

Unlike Hong Kong where the colonialism lasted well into the post-World War II modern period, most former British colonies in Asia – India, Burma, Malaya and Singapore – became independent soon after World War II, before Modern architecture became dominant in the built-environment.

For these countries, the separation between "colonial architecture" and post-colonial Modern architecture is clear. For Hong Kong, "colonial architecture" is not limited to pre-World War II buildings, but also include many post-World War II Modern buildings.

Defining “Colonial Architecture”

What is “Colonial Architecture”?

Strictly speaking, there is no such thing!

The term is of U.S. origin, referring to the style of architecture developed in the 13 British colonies in America just before and during the American Revolution (War of Independence, 1775-1783).

What is “Hong Kong Colonial Architecture”?

Strictly speaking, all buildings, traditional or modern, built during Hong Kong's colonial period from 1841 to 1997 can be classified as “colonial architecture.”

What does this mean?

It means that “colonial architecture” as a term has to be contextualized in terms of

(1) place

(2) time

In the case of this lecture, the place is Hong Kong, and the time is...

Defining "Colonial Architecture"

Contextualizing "colonial architecture" by place and time:

One country, two systems; one place (Hong Kong), four periods

1st Period:	Victorian period
Timeline:	From 1841 to the early 1900s
Architecture:	Hong Kong colonial architecture of the Victorian period
2nd Period:	Edwardian period
Timeline:	From the early 1900s to the 1920s
Architecture:	Hong Kong colonial architecture of the Edwardian period
3rd Period:	Pre-World War II Modern period
Timeline:	From the 1930s to the 1940s
Architecture:	Hong Kong colonial architecture of the pre-war Modern period
4th Period:	Post-World War II Modern period
Timeline:	From the 1950s to the 1990s
Architecture:	Hong Kong colonial architecture of the post-war Modern period

Hong Kong's Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period From 1841 to the early 1900s



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period

This refers to colonial architecture developed in Hong Kong during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901).



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period

Many of Hong Kong's early buildings were designed and built by the British Army's **Corps of Royal Engineers** – military officers and men trained in architecture, construction, engineering and surveying.



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period
Flagstaff House (1846) – designed and built by the Royal Engineers.



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period

Flagstaff House (1846) – likely designed and built by the Royal Engineers; the design, based on the Queen's House in Greenwich, was probably copied from architectural pattern books.



ORIGINAL: Queen's House, Greenwich, 1653



19th-century architectural pattern books
(建築設計模式刊物)



ADAPTATION: Flagstaff House, Hong Kong, 1846

Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period

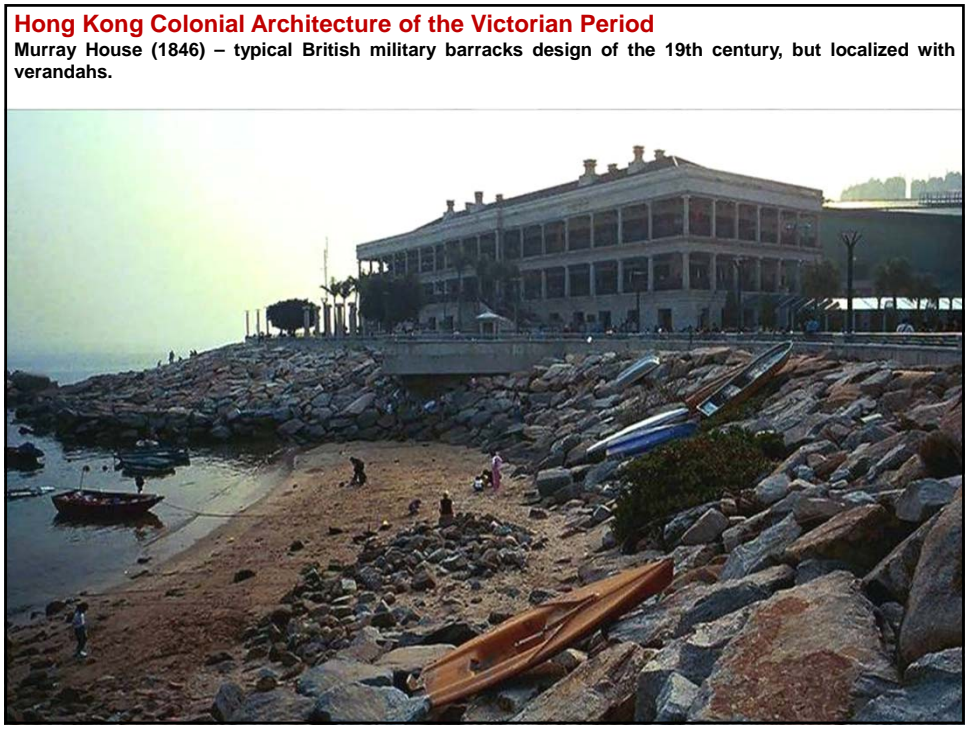
Flagstaff House (1846) – design adapted from the Queen's House in Greenwich; localized with verandahs (for shading) and side-hinged louvered windows (instead of vertical sliding windows).



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period

Murray House (1846) – by two officers of the Royal Engineers: designed by Major Edward Aldrich (Aldrich Bay is named after him) with construction supervised by Lieutenant Thomas Bernard Collinson (Mount Collinson is named after him).



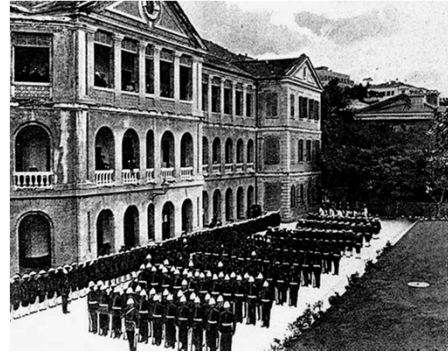


Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period

Central Police Station Barrack Block (1864) – early police barracks were directly derived from the military barracks typology.



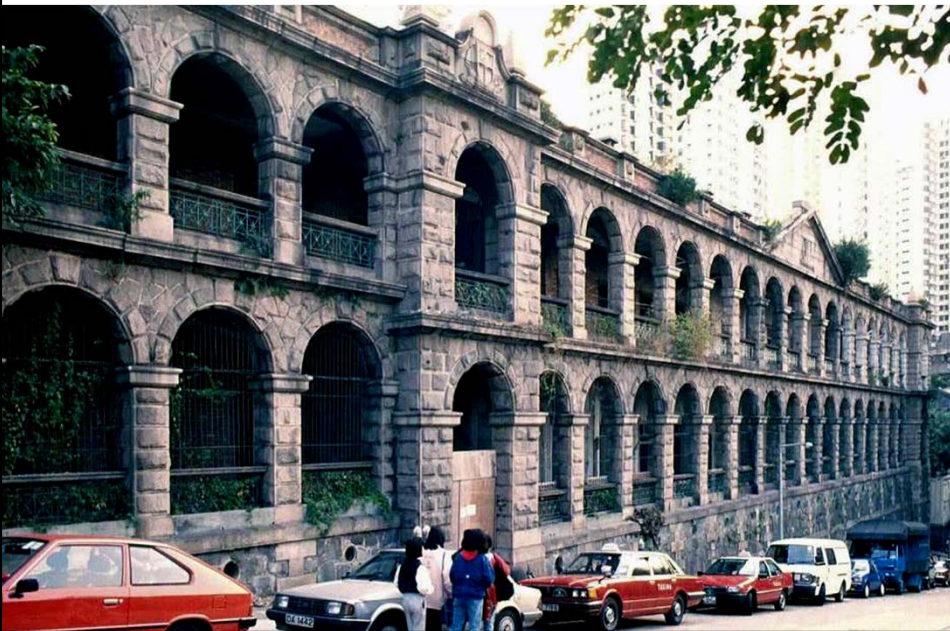
ADAPTATION: British Colonial Barracks, Red Fort, Delhi, 1857



ADAPTATION: CPS Barrack Block, Hong Kong, 1864

Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period

Old Mental Hospital (originally Western Nurses' Quarters) (1891) – design derived from the military barracks typology, adapted for non-military institutional uses.



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period

Old Mental Hospital (originally Western Nurses' Quarters) (1891) – design derived from the military barracks typology, adapted for non-military institutional uses.



ADAPTATION: British Colonial Barracks, Red Fort, Delhi, 1857



ADAPTATION: Old Mental Hospital, Hong Kong, 1891

Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period

St. John's Cathedral (1847)



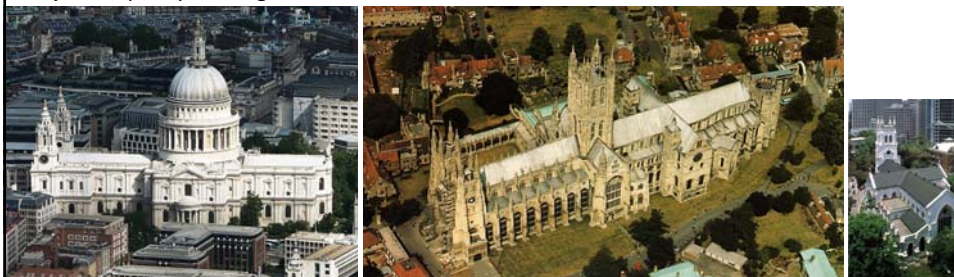
Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period
St. John's Cathedral (1847) – adapted from English country church design.



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period
Comparison (scale) with England's cathedrals



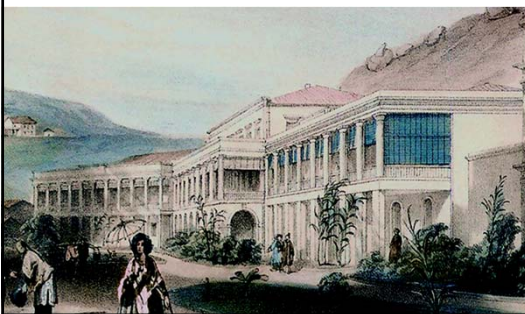
Comparison (scale) with England's cathedrals



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period
Houses (Western)



ORIGINS
Manor / country house in London, early 19th century



ADAPTATION
Grand house at Spring Gardens, Wan Chai, Hong Kong, mid-19th century
Similar to the British manor /country house, but localized with verandahs, fewer fireplaces (fewer chimneys) and more shallow pitched roofs (no snow to deal with).

Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period
Government House: temporary (1843-46); original (1855); and Japanese building (1944)



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period
Government House (1855)



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Japanese Occupation Period
Current Government House (1944)



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period

Early commercial buildings (Western)



ORIGINAL
London high (commercial) street, mid- to late 19th century



ADAPTATION
Queen's Road Central, mid-19th century

Hong Kong's early colonial commercial buildings were similar to those found in London, but localized with more windows and verandahs.

Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Victorian Period

Later commercial buildings

Mughal architecture and late 19th-century Anglo-Indian Colonial Architecture



Hong Kong Club Building (1897)



Queen's Building (1899)



**Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Edwardian Period
From the early 1900s to the 1920s**



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Edwardian Period

This refers to colonial architecture developed in Hong Kong through the reign of King Edward VII (1901-1910) and World War I (1914-1918).

Two architectural styles are representative of colonial architecture of the Edwardian period:

Queen Anne Revival (popular from the 1870s to the 1900s) and **Edwardian Baroque** (popular from the 1900s to the 1910s).



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Edwardian Period
Queen Anne Revival: Old Bacteriological / Pathological Institute (1906)



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Edwardian Period
Queen Anne Revival: Western Market North Block (1906)



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Edwardian Period
Queen Anne Revival: HKU's Lugard Hall (1913, demolished); Eliot Hall (1914); and May Hall (1915)



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Edwardian Period
Edwardian Baroque: Old Supreme Court (1912)



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Edwardian Period

Edwardian Baroque: Old Supreme Court (1912) vs. Old Bailey (1907)



Old Supreme Court (舊高等法院), Hong Kong (1912)

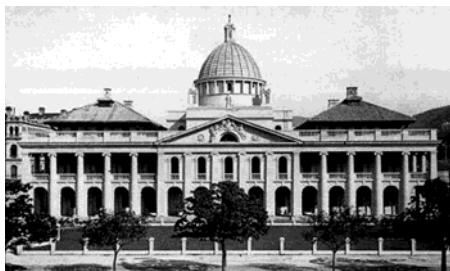


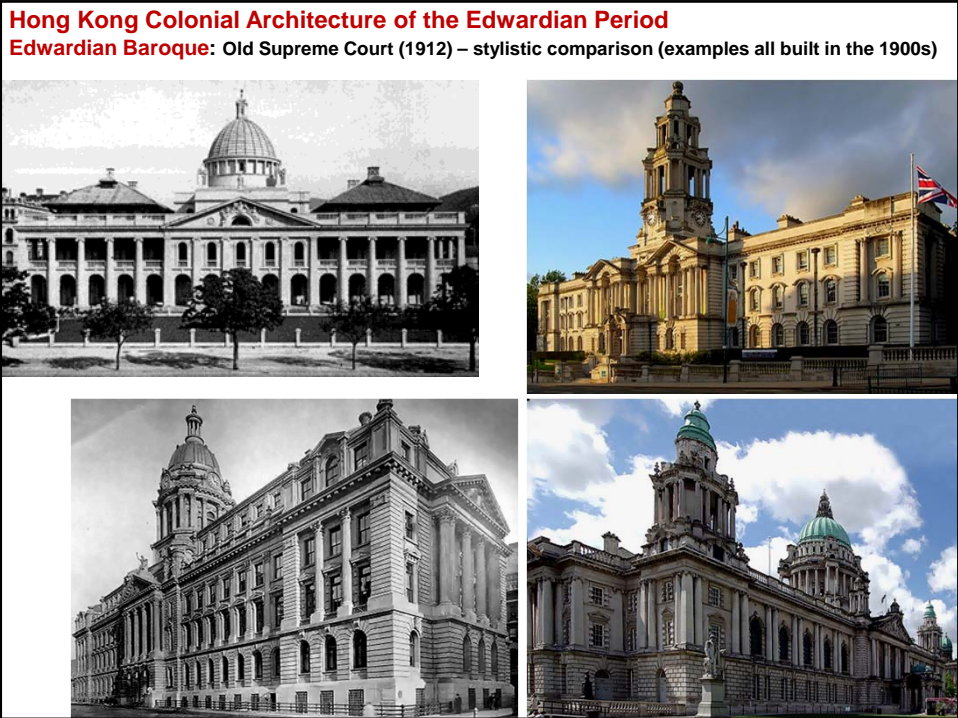
Old Bailey (Central Criminal Court 中央刑事法院), London (1907)



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Edwardian Period

Edwardian Baroque: Old Supreme Court (1912) – typology comparison





Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Edwardian Period
Eclectic (mixed styles): Old Dairy Farm Building / Foreign Correspondents Club (1917)



Hong Kong's Colonial Architecture of the Pre-war Modern Period
From the 1930s to the 1940s

Three architectural styles are representative of colonial architecture of the pre-war modern period: **Stripped Classicism**, **Art Deco** and **Streamline Moderne** (they were most popular during the 1930s).

King George V (1910-1936)

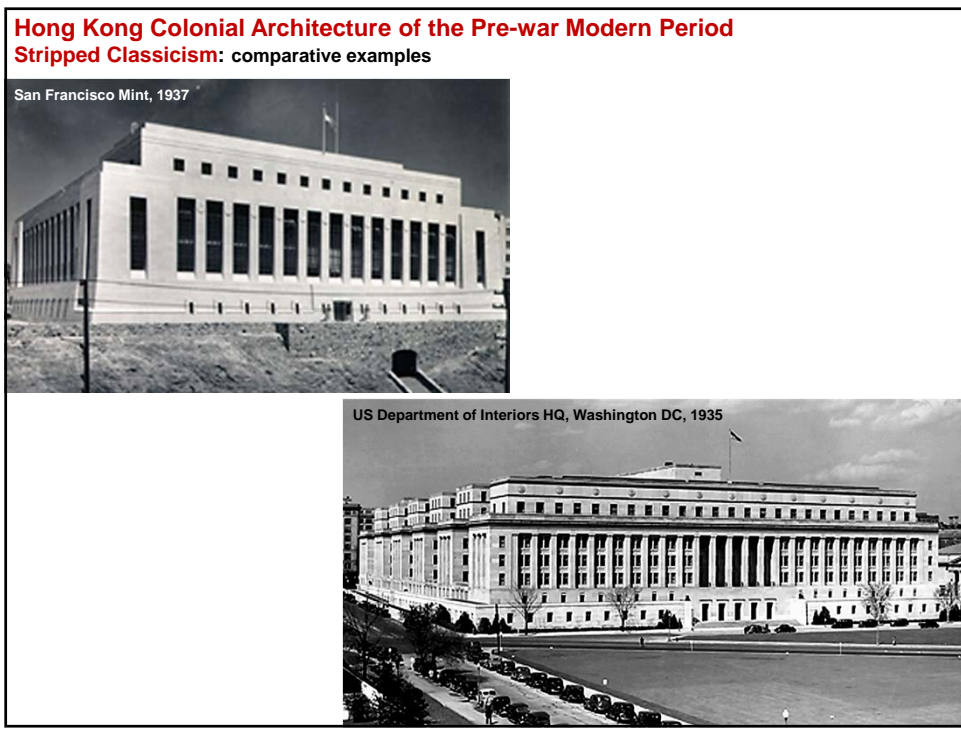
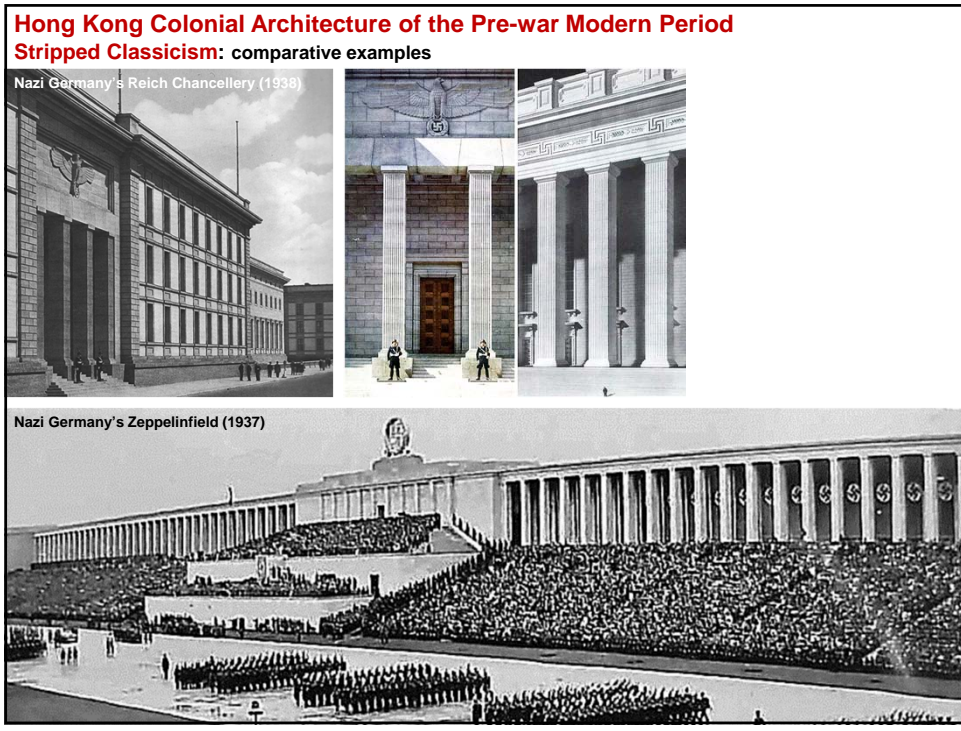


King Edward VIII (1936)




King George VI (1936-1952)






Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Pre-war Modern Period
Stripped Classicism: comparative examples


Great Hall of the People, Beijing, 1959




Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Pre-war Modern Period
Stripped Classicism: Hong Kong examples



Wan Chai Police Station, Hong Kong, 1932



Queen Mary Hospital Nurses Quarters, Hong Kong, 1936

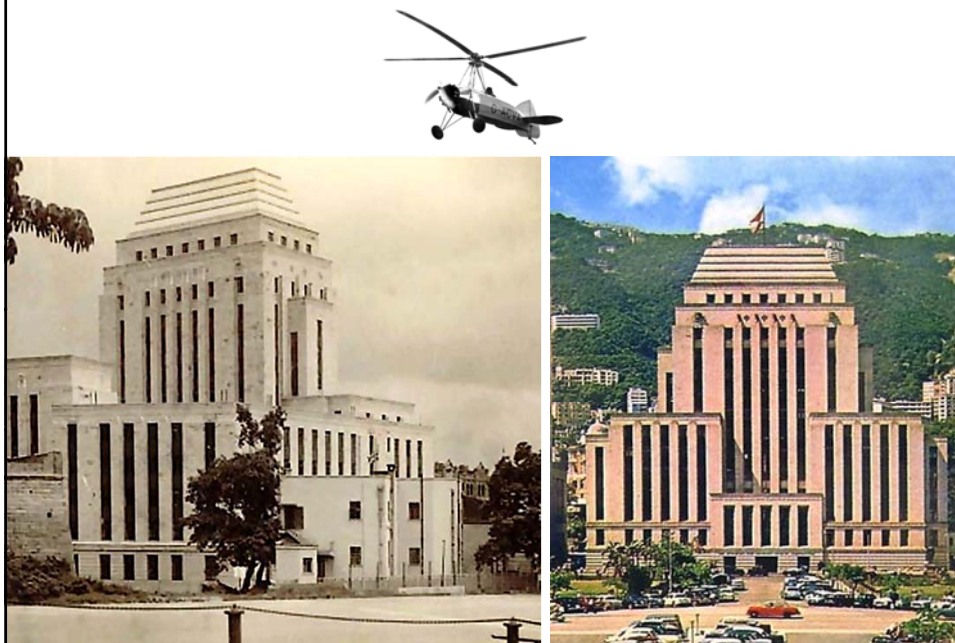


Hong Kong's Upper Levels Police Station (1935)

Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Pre-war Modern Period
Stripped Classicism: Old Wan Chai Police Station (1932)



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Pre-war Modern Period
Art Deco: Old HSBC Building (1935)



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Pre-war Modern Period
Art Deco: China Light & Power Building (1949)



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Pre-war Modern Period
Streamline Moderne (late branch of Art Deco): Wan Chai Market (1937), Central Market (1939)



Hong Kong's Colonial Architecture of the Post-war Modern Period From the 1950s to the 1990s

In Modern architecture, the use of the word "style" is avoided. Instead, Modernism in architecture is seen as a continuous "movement", roughly divided into the early (1950s-60s) and the late periods (1970s onward).

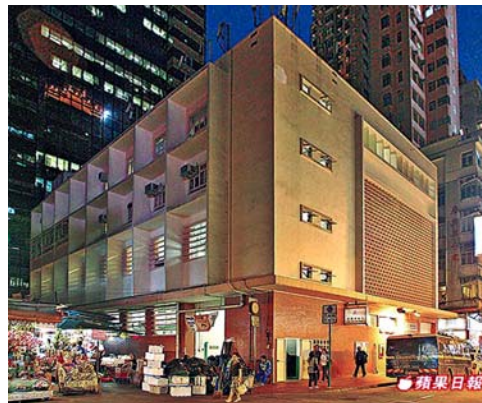
Queen Elizabeth II (1952-present)



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Post-war Modern Period

Early Modernism ("Bauhaus"): Bridges St. Market (1953); Tang Lung Chau Market (1964)

*There is no such thing as the "Bauhaus" style – it is the Hong Kong way of referring to Early Modern architecture.



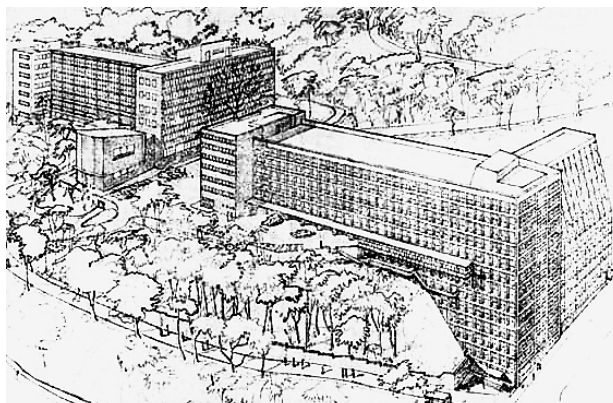
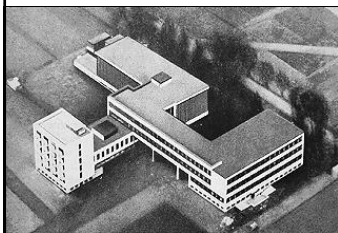
Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Post-war Modern Period
Early Modernism ("Bauhaus"): early public housing blocks (1950s)



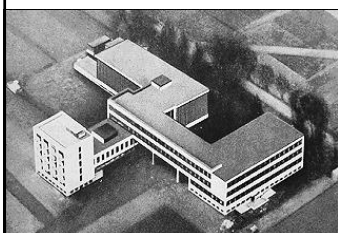
Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Post-war Modern Period
Early Modernism ("Bauhaus"): composite buildings (1950s-60s)



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Post-war Modern Period
Early Modernism ("Bauhaus"): Central Government Office (1957-59, completed in three phrases)



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Post-war Modern Period
Early Modernism ("Bauhaus"): City Hall (1962)



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Post-war Modern Period
Late Modernism: Connaught Centre (now Jardine House) (1972)



Hong Kong Colonial Architecture of the Post-war Modern Period
Late Modernism: HSBC Building (1985)



