



Mark Potter/Eno

Left, Jiahua Shanghai Tower, Shanghai, Fox & Fowle with Gluckman, Liu Associated Architects
Right, World Financial Center, Shanghai, Kohn Pedersen Fox

Coming Home

Not all architects who have been working in Asia are still active there. Some had their projects canceled mid-stream, though **Fox & Fowle** was luckier. “We have two buildings under construction in Shanghai, and we can’t wait to see them, but we are extremely busy doing work at home now. New York City has always been our focus, and we have all our new work here,” **Robert Fox** explained. “We are doing a mixed-use complex in Yonkers right on the waterfront. We are doing interiors, institutions, five different schools. We are finishing an apartment house in the West Village for Rockrose.” He didn’t even mention the firm’s very visible work in Times Square.

Kohn Pedersen Fox has had a similar experience. “We’ve found that activity in the United States has picked up tremendously. While we’ve enjoyed our work in Asia, the slowdown has allowed us to concentrate a little more on the work here,” **William Pedersen** said. Although most of his firm’s Korean work has been shelved, the Rodin Pavilion for Samsung has just been completed. A huge mixed-use project on Nanjung Road in Shanghai is also going forward, as is the World Financial Center there. And the four- or five-million-square-foot mixed-use Roppongi complex, “a kind of Rockefeller Center for Tokyo” is about to start construction. KPF is responsible for the hotel and a 53-story office building there, **Richard Gluckman** is designing a museum on top, and Jon Jerde of Los Angeles is filling the ground floors with retail stores. Kohn Pedersen Fox is also beginning the design of a large mixed-use project in Manila.

Lessons Learned

We had wonderful opportunities in Asia,” Pedersen said. “Generally we were given a chance to do our best work, and that was worth all the time and difficulty and travel. It broadened our knowledge of issues and building types. In Shanghai, we had to figure out how to build meaningfully in modern China without resorting to worn-out

symbols such as pagodas that trap a culture in its history in an obvious way.” For the World Financial Center in Shanghai, which will be the tallest building in the world, they drew on “ancient Chinese beliefs where the earth is symbolized by a square prism and heaven by a circular disk. The big circular opening [at the top of the building] relieves wind pressure, but it also represents the circle and the square, the earth and the sky.”

Because Asian high-rise buildings tend to have deeper and wider floor plates to accommodate large teams of office workers, the architects were forced to think about ways to design office buildings differently than they do here. From their work in Europe, such as the Thames Court in London and the DG Bank in Frankfurt, they have learned to consider the environmental aspects of design as well.

“In Europe, energy costs are six times what they are here. Companies own their buildings and hold onto them,” Pederson explained. “They spend more on first-costs. Double-walled facades are common.” Here in the U.S., developers often sell their buildings so “much depends on a building’s ability to become economically feasible”—immediately.

The Competition Entrée

Some architects have entered the international arena through competitions. Several years ago, **Sydney Architects** won a competition to design the Lujiazui-Itochu Headquarters building, which is now under construction. Then the young firm was invited to enter an international competition to design the 38-story, 385-room Hong Ta Hotel, also in Shanghai, which they won earlier this year. Its scheme is composed of two curved slabs clad in red granite. A central, glass-enclosed corridor runs between the slabs, and there is a restaurant and lounge at the top. The 76-foot-high base has a three-story lobby, a ballroom, five restaurants, a fitness center, and conference facilities. Construction will begin before the end of the year.

Similarly, **Garrison Siegel Architects** found a toehold in Asia when they received a mention in a competition to design the National Museum of Korea in Seoul. Afterward, their Korean collaborators, Kumwon, invited them to enter a second competition for the Korean Embassy in Beijing. And that one they won. Now the partners, who are in their thirties (barely out of KPF), are

Minoya Headquarters and Showroom, Gifu, Japan, Hashimoto & Partners and Umezawa Architects

