

MAPPING IT

Centaine Club

Hong Kong, China
PLOTCREATIVE

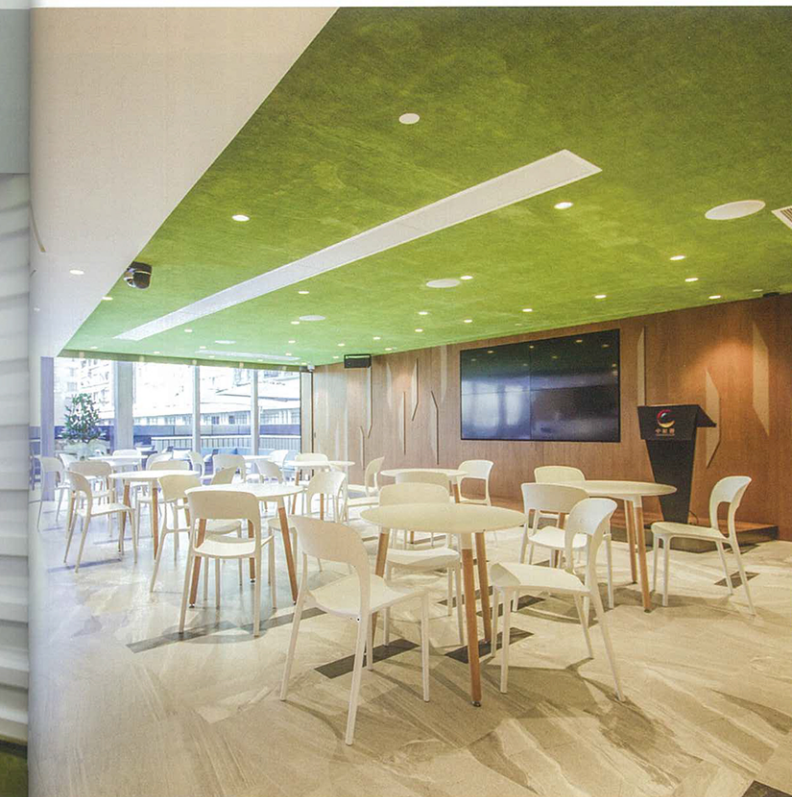
Photography by PLOTCREATIVE



Centaine is one of Hong Kong's largest property agencies, with agents placed strategically in offices all over the city. It's difficult to walk very far along a commercial street or shopping mall corridor without chancing upon one of their outlets. But few look like this new venue for the firm – a large open presentation space plus terrace in Tsimshatsui, Kowloon, designed by PLOTCREATIVE. The space is essentially a multifunction room built for gatherings of agents and clients, in which Centaine can showcase new projects, upcoming real estate events, or specialist exhibits. Against a wood veneer backdrop wall is placed a raised stage with lectern and oversized LCD screen. In front are scattered small tables for the audience to sit at, and opposite is a long refreshment bar faced in white marble, like the floor. The bar lends a party atmosphere to the space, emphasising that this is a social zone, and hewing to the 'soft-sell' atmosphere. One long wall of the space is entirely glazed and opens widely onto a generous fresh-air terrace, with further seating clusters for parties, gatherings, or fine-weather meetings.

The design begins at the lift lobby area, which is clad in an aggressive mixture of finish materials that confront you as soon as you step out of the lift: marble flooring with a lively pattern, a segment of wall in gold-toned metal featuring a two-dimensional relief abstraction of an urban plan, and another segment of wall panels that vertically tilt forward and back, as if the city were experiencing a small





earthquake. At the narrow ends of the space are walls of grass-green carpeting, which in turn is reflected in the polished-mirror stainless-steel ceiling. The green is repeated in the ceiling of the big room itself – a whimsical inversion of grass (and carpet) underfoot. The glazed screen between the lift lobby and main space is decorated with a black-and-white design that evokes contour maps – an allusion to Hong Kong's lively topographical condition. A small marble reception-desk indicates the way inside. The main design reference is to maps of the city, seen from different angles and abstracted in various ways – and materials.

And there are a lot of materials going on here. It's not easy to marry coffee-toned wood veneers, loud marble flooring, polished metals and bright carpeting – all with different patterning – and avoid a generally 1990s vibe, but they do stay on the better side of the palette... just. Or maybe the undertone of nostalgia in colours and materials is deliberate – a nod to the city's property past, when all of these materials had their prominent places in the public mindset as monikers of real estate value. Lord knows plenty of people made plenty of money over the decades, investing in the stuff Centaline specialises in: Hong Kong flats. And even today, apparently, surfaces clad in marble, veneers and shiny metals represent real estate success. This highly functional space may be a wink at where all that money still goes. Either way, this isn't your average real estate office.