

“Discover the State Theatre in All of Us”
An exceptional immersive event in a Grade I historic site before
New World Development begins the restoration of the State Theatre

Adrian Cheng “The State Theatre will return as a new cultural performing arts landmark”

(Hong Kong, April 1, 2021) The legend of the State Theatre lives on. **New World Development** is staging an unprecedented immersive event **“Discover the State Theatre in All of Us,”** to restore the cultural icon to its original glamour.

Visitors to the theatre during the event will be brought back to its golden age in the 1950s. At the lobby ticket box office, they will receive a vintage style movie ticket, which marks the start of the first-person immersive experience. They will then be invited to play a part in the history of State Theatre from the days of the Empire Theatre staging international performances, to “Little Shanghai” as well as to the State Theatre featuring popular Chinese and Western movies.

After successfully consolidating ownership of the 68-year-old State Theatre, located at 277-291 King’s Road, North Point last year, **New World Development** announced a meticulous conservation project to restore the Grade I historic site. The iconic parabolic exoskeleton truss at the roof will be conserved, while the revitalised architecture will be transformed into a new landmark for culture and arts.

Before launching a complete architectural conservation of the State Theatre, **Culture for Tomorrow**, a non-profit organisation under **the New World Group**, specially curated the immersive event to honour the State Theatre. Visitors are cordially invited to take part in and explore the exclusive story of the theatre through various activities, among which are classic scenes of the theatre which will be restored. In view of the COVID-19 situation, virtual guided tours will also be provided online.

Adrian Cheng, CEO of New World Development and the founder of Culture for Tomorrow said, “I hope the public will experience the glorious past of the State Theatre first hand through this immersive event. Its history may have faded through time, but its story is far from over. With our conservation project, the State Theatre will return once again as a culture and arts landmark with more riveting stories to tell. As we continue our mission to connect business success with social progress, this marks an important chapter for New World Development, in which we orchestrate creativity and social innovation to create a cultural oasis for our next generation.”

Experiencing the development of the legendary theatre through role-play

The State Theatre (former Empire Theatre) opened in 1952 and is Hong Kong’s last surviving large-scale movie palace. Its captivating parabolic exoskeleton truss is a unique design that bears witness to the history of North Point once dubbed “Little Shanghai.” To formulate a comprehensive plan for conservation and development, the Group assembled a team of elite local and international consultants with rich experience in heritage conservation.

Before the revitalisation work begins, **Culture for Tomorrow** curated this special immersive event, in which visitors will take on several classic roles from 1950s while studying the theatre’s history. For example, as **The Great Entertainer Harry Oscar Odell**, who founded the Empire Theatre, they will explore how the international palace-level performance venue was designed. And as **The Legendary Architect**, they will create the unique curvature of the roof that makes the State Theatre iconic. Other roles include the **Diva**, the **Joyful Audience**, and **The Famous Director**. Through the media of sound, images, painting, and over 100 valuable historical artefacts released for the first time, the golden age of entertainment in the 1950s will appear once again.

Over 100 historic artefacts to depict the scene of “Little Shanghai”

The Group started collecting relics and memorabilia of the State Theatre three years ago. Over 100 artefacts will be exhibited in the event to introduce the cultural landscape of the old days. These include movie handbills from the 1950s, old tickets of midnight screenings, tickets of balcony and stall seats, as well as staff uniforms, postcards featuring the King's Road tram station, an aerial photo of the old North Point area, and more.

In addition, visitors can also review the sales brochure of the State Theatre building and the 1970s movie posters painted by the local poster master Yuen Tai Yung. Rare movie posters and excerpts from the late international superstar Bruce Lee's posthumous work *Game of Death* in 1978 will also be displayed.

Both the interior and exterior of the State Theatre Shopping Arcade will be restored to its original brilliance, with old movie poster light boxes on the outer wall, a pavilion based on “Little Shanghai,” founder Harry Oscar Odell's desk, the classic performance stage of the Empire Theatre, as well as a large model of the parabolic truss. Visitors will walk through a time tunnel of special projection installations, lighting and musical effects to savour the history of the State Theatre in the last century.

A video clip by **Molly Odell**, the daughter-in-law of Harry Odell. describing his life story and the glorious deeds of his entertainment kingdom will be played during the event.

Artistic creation by talented young artists with a “Full House” mural

The event will also help visitors to rediscover old Hong Kong in innovative new ways. A group of young artists is involved including **Lam Ka Hang**, who is a film poster painter and the founder of the No Paper Studio. Lam was always fascinated by Hong Kong movies. He has a great sense of humour, and also mature skills in digital technology. Lam will create a series of movie posters featuring the historical and cultural elements of the State Theatre. These will include a “Full House” mural on the façade of the Shopping Arcade manifesting the charm of classic movie characters in a nostalgic way. The humorous mural will surely become a must-see item along the bustling King's Road.

Culture for Tomorrow also invited **Sam Chan**, a young calligrapher who won the Hong Kong Calligraphy Open Championship for three consecutive years and is the founder of the Facebook page Callisupply, to design an impromptu creation on the iron gate of the theatre. He will be injecting his emotions towards the theatre into his calligraphy with reference to the movie designs of the 50s-60s.

Musicians' dedicated song list and live music performance

Veteran music critic **Wong Chi Chung** will also be sharing his memories of the theatre at the William Music record store. This was a must-visit hipster spot in the shopping arcade in the old days. Inspired by the State Theatre conservation project, he specially prepared a nostalgic song list on KKBOX. This includes a number of popular local songs that were known in every household. As COVID-19 has hit the performing arts industry with tremendous difficulties, **Culture for Tomorrow** will sponsor musicians including Fung Ming Ng, Quinn Lui, and Byron Cheung to perform on the stage before the revamp of the State Theatre Arcade.