

# Ken Yeang: A Life in Architecture

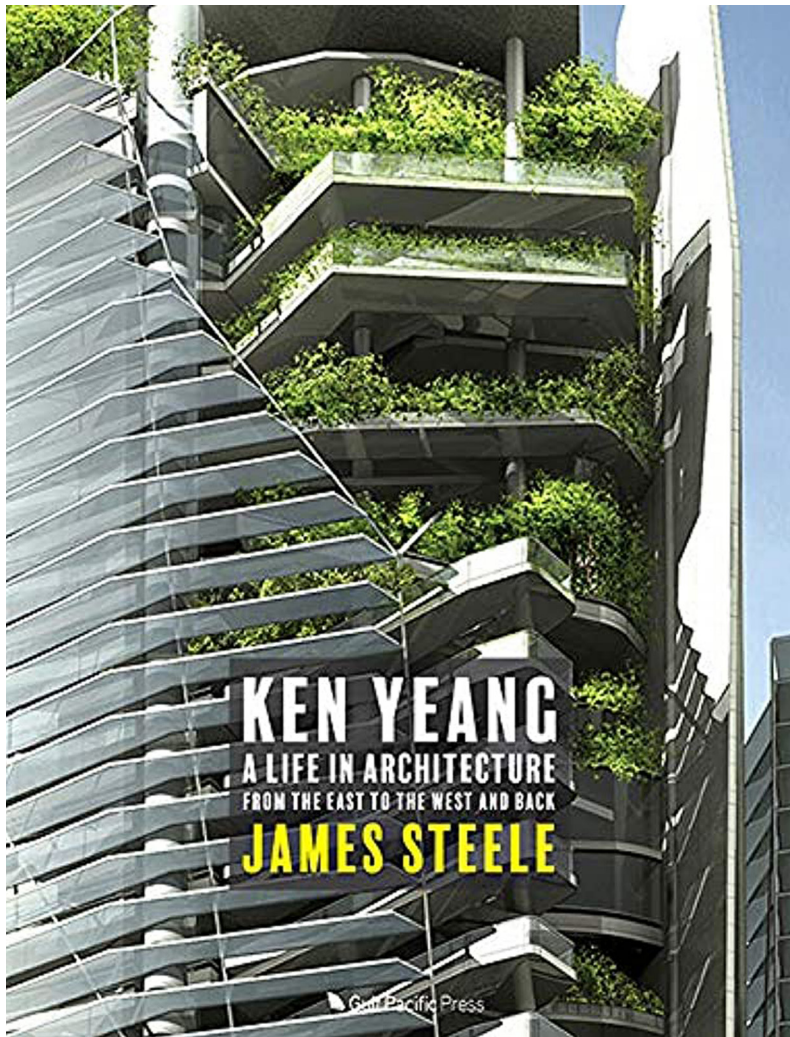
## From the East to the West and Back

By James Steele

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Yeang's architecture is based on the ecological sciences, in which built forms become biodiverse hybrid living systems that function synergistically, physically and systemically, and are integrated with ecosystems and what he refers to as "the biogeochemical cycles of the biosphere". His architecture, like a living organism, is constantly becoming, evolving, and maturing, in a continuous process that the Japanese refer as 'kaizen' or being in a stage of constant improvement. The work is the outcome of his continuous research and by his firms' design endeavours, carried out since 1971 when he started to work in the field of green design. It is these altogether that make his work important for not just for the architectural community, but for all those who find that their daily work impinges on the natural environment.

This narrative will describe key mentors who have taught and advised him in this passage, those who have influenced his work and thinking, and the heroic figures whom he admires and who have also advertently influenced his work and ideas, as well as their pedagogical context surrounding them.

Most publications on architects are essentially 'coffee table books' of their built and design work. What differentiates this volume is the in-depth review of the factors and issues that are the causes underlying the work of Yeang as an architect. This is the story of genesis in the passage that Yeang took in developing and advancing an environmental biologically driven theory and design approach for the making of a sustainable and resilient built environment. In particular it is his adoption of the ecological sciences as the central focus of his work on green design that makes it authentic and viral for others in the field of green design, and which differentiates his work from other green architects. This volume further provides important insights of Yeang as a person which will undoubtedly offer important lesson for young architects, especially those in his region, giving them an inkling of what it takes to achieve Yeang's accomplishments in his chosen field of ecological design.

### About the Author:



**James Steele** is an architect and educator who trained at the University of Pennsylvania and received his doctorate in urban planning and development from the University of Southern California, where he has taught history and theory as well as design studio since 1991. He organised the first Foreign Studies Program for architecture students in Malaysia in 1998, administering it through its fifteenth and final session in 2013 and then founded a new undergraduate program in South America, based in Sao Paulo, Brazil. He has written extensively on contemporary architecture and has been a guest critic and speaker at numerous universities in the US and internationally.



**Ken Yeang** is an architect, planner and ecologist, known for his signature ecoarchitecture and ecomasterplans, which are differentiated from other green architects by an authentic ecology-based approach, and by their distinctive green aesthetics, performance and biodiversity, extending beyond conventional rating systems. He was trained at the AA School (Architectural Association) in the UK. He is a pioneer in the field of green design starting from his doctorate in the 70's at Cambridge University on ecological design and planning.