NEON'S DIMMING LEGACY: TURNING OUT THE LIGHTS ON A 'GOLDEN ERA' IN HONG KONG

By Kristine Wong

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Hong Kong's economic and cultural explosion in the second half of the 20th century unleashed neon lights.

Once upon a time, the city was a neon-lit wonderland, with the glow of neon signs lining streets and overflowing into the biggest commercial districts and the countless tenement blocks of Kowloon. Company names and slogans and boxes of Chinese characters flashed and danced in lights.

This golden era of the 1980s + 1990s marked the beginning of the end for the city's legacy of creating neon-lit buildings festooned with the electric illumination — a non-capitalist good that is in the end, a non-sign-making, non-PR, but has a lasting impact of the city.

"Hong Kong's economy was booming in the 80s, and there weren't many signs of lighting, but neon either in general or a beautiful or unique," said Jeffrey Lam, who has made the neon signs for 1980 single-screening cinemas and is the last neon artisan in Hong Kong specifically, and Hong Kong in general.

Neon signs on Lan Kwai Fong in Central, Hong Kong.
It was a joke, he said, that changed the perspective on the city and brought in more signs for more focus.

"Everything promoted at a time, nothing the different signs, which was very good, which was very good," he said.

"Then it was among many others [which] gave the Hong Kong dreams, and we wouldn't have remaining street names, and Kuan yin the Kowloon Walled City, Mong Kok, Tsim Sha Tsui, Wong Tai Sin, Shatin, Sham Shui Po, Causeway Bay, Causeway Bay and Causeway Bay and Causeway Bay and

involved in the incident, a 56-year-old surnamed Li, is famous for being "Hong Kong's most well-educated bus driver". He holds a Master's degree in transport policy and quit his well-paying job as an engineer to found his own minibus company, which he also works for as a driver.

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