

Historic Building Appraisal
Stone House
No. 4 Tai Koon Yuen, Diamond Hill, Kowloon

Tai Koon Yuen was established by **Yang Shou-ren** (楊守仁) who came originally from Shanghai, and took the name from the famous Chinese novel “A Dream of Red Mansions” (紅樓夢). Many film studios set up there and built houses for their artists and studio staff. Due to the attractive rural environment many wealthy Chinese businessmen also built villas there. The area later declined due to the establishment of dyeing factories and other industrial factories being set up nearby. The rich people moved out and squatters moved in. The Stone House was built sometime in the 1940s, and it was owned by **Wu Jun-zhao** (吳君肇), a manager of the former Shanghai Bank of Communications (前上海交通銀行) who rented the house to the famous actor **Qiao Hong** (喬宏).

*Historical
Interest*

The Stone House is built of granite from a small quarry located within the Diamond Hill area. It was originally a two-storey building. A temporary structure of corrugated steel sheets has been built on the roof. Structurally, the walls are built of dressed stone bedded and jointed with thick mortar. The internal walls are finished with plaster and paint. All the windows are metal framed, with some green glazed grilles at the ground floor on the east façade. The front part of the house is single-storey with a tubular steel balustrade around the flat roof indicating that it may have been used in the past as a roof terrace for sitting out.

*Architectural
Merit*

The Stone House does not seem to have been designed in any particular architectural style, but its geometric shapes, flat roofs, regular bands of windows and “ships’ railings” to the roof terrace put the house in the **International Modern** category. The use of natural stone or rubble for the external walls is unusual for this architectural style, but was used by architects such as **Frank Lloyd Wright**, **Le Corbusier** and **H.H. Richardson** to harmonize with the surrounding landscape. The use of local materials from the Diamond Hill Quarry follows the Puginian doctrine of “fidelity to place”, the idea that buildings should be built of local materials so that they appear to belong to the landscape, with deep respect for local tradition.

Due to the clearance of Tai Hom Village (大磡村) and the adjacent squatter areas, the Stone House is the only house that still survives. Although alterations have been made, the original structure can still be made out. As a rare example of a modern small house using local materials it has built heritage value.

*Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity*

The building has social value and local interest having been once part of a local community of artists and film makers and later the flourishing quarry industry.

*Social Value
& Local
Interest*

Under the Diamond Hill Comprehensive Development Area project, the Stone House will be relocated next to the old pillbox on the site. It could be turned into a small museum commemorating the film and quarry industries that used to thrive in the area.

*Adaptive
Re-use*