

Colors 44: MASS HOUSING

Meet Dicky Cheung, Hong Kong's most desirable eunuch.

Sing karaoke in Minsk World, an ex-Soviet aircraft carrier.

Learn how to induce a peaceful death using just a bag of charcoal and a box of matches.

For COLORS 44: Mass housing, we visited the Choi Hung (Rainbow) housing estate, one of the oldest tower blocks in Hong Kong and home to 43,000 people. Surrounded by a maze of motorways and intersections, Choi Hung is a city within a city. With Triad gangs, a soap opera icon, a brothel, a shopping mall packed with fake Guccis, a Buddhist temple and an illegal squatter camp all vying for some precious space, the estate is a microcosm of modern China.

In Choi Hung, one of the most densely populated places on the planet, privacy is hard to find. With families of eight living together in tiny one-room apartments, the lack of personal space is acute, and private life is played out in public, on the basketball court and in the street market. We met Winnie and Alan in the Diamond Hill shopping mall—a teenage couple with nowhere else to go. Eighteen-year-old Winnie admitted to us that breaking up with her boyfriend is her greatest fear. What would she do if it happened?

In Choi Hung's nine 20-story towers, suicide is a common solution to a broken heart—so common that the police even have a special category for it: They call a suicide after a break-up with a partner a "love crime." In COLORS 44 we also give practical advice on how to talk a teenage girl (the group most prone to suicide) out of jumping off the roof of a high-rise.

Perhaps these giant blocks (as governments have claimed since the 1960s, when they first started to spring up) are a "solution" to affordable mass housing. But, as our correspondents confirmed by visiting projects in 35 other countries, the reality is frequently asbestos cladding, cockroaches and concrete. We doubt that any of the people they interviewed will ever be the subjects of glossy "lifestyle" features, but we did find that they share an unusually strong sense of community.

So, as the second-home market booms across the developed world, come and meet the people who will probably never own their first.

COLORS 44: Mass Housing. On sale now.

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