

INDESIGNLIVE.SG

#67 | APRIL | MAY | 2014



8 886385 903073

S\$10.00

cubes

INDESIGN

INTERIORS ARCHITECTURE DESIGN

W ARCHITECTS TWIST THE RULES

JAYA IBRAHIM

SALAD DRESSING

POINT YAMU BY PAOLA NAVONE

CEYLON ROADHOUSE BY TAN + TSAKONAS | CREDIT SUISSE SMARTWORKING PROJECT BY HASSELL

A LOOK AT HANS BROUWER’S PRESIDENT PLACE IN HO CHI MINH CITY

TEXT » PATRICIA CHIA
IMAGES » COURTESY OF HB DESIGN



AMONGST A MODEST COLLECTION of ageing, nondescript, reinforced concrete structures and mix of neo-classical and Romanesque traces of French colonial rule, a bifurcated aluminium cuboid stands out distinctly from amongst its surroundings. The building’s ambition to be recognised as a modern development in Ho Chi Minh’s District 1 is clear – its reddish-brown aluminium panels contrast starkly with patinated white concrete, while its horizontally-striated facade of profiled louvres differentiate themselves from solid masonry.

Considered by architect Hans Brouwer to be a “boutique development”, President Place is a project of client David Clarkin of Sapphire Vietnam, an expanding property development company. The building comprises mainly of offices, but also includes a restaurant and sky garden. “The [client’s] brief was quite simple – maximise leasable area. There was little by way of form, material or style directives,” Brouwer explains. “Our goal was to create a building that would punch above its weight [by performing as] something notable despite its modest size” – the structure is just thirteen storeys tall.

The project’s most successful accolade is that of attaining Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold Certification – it is the first development in Ho Chi Minh City to do so. LEED is a set of rating systems developed by the

U.S Green Building Council intended to help building owners and operators be environmentally responsible and use resources efficiently.

Unsurprised by the certification, Brouwer reveals that “President Place was from the outset determined to be ‘green’. Together with the client, it was agreed that we do whatever was feasible to achieve a high LEED rating.” The result of their efforts is an impressive implementation of passive and active strategies that reduce energy usage and result in cost savings of about 12.65 per cent.

Key sustainable strategies include the following: materials and products were extracted or manufactured within 500 miles of the project site, thereby supporting the use of indigenous resources and reducing carbon footprint from transportation; the vegetated roof reduces urban heat island effect, minimises storm water runoff volume and lowers heat gain to the building, maximising energy savings; the facade design and shallow floor depths maximise daylight access such that over 75 per cent of regular occupied space receives adequate luminance levels during clear sky conditions, reducing the need for electric lighting within the building and decreasing energy usage. The project’s LEED Gold label is definitely a draw for businesses, and gives it a strong identity as a forerunner in sustainable design in Ho Chi Minh.

While LEED criterion drove performative and material strategies for President Place, it was



PUNCHING
ABOVE ITS
WEIGHT

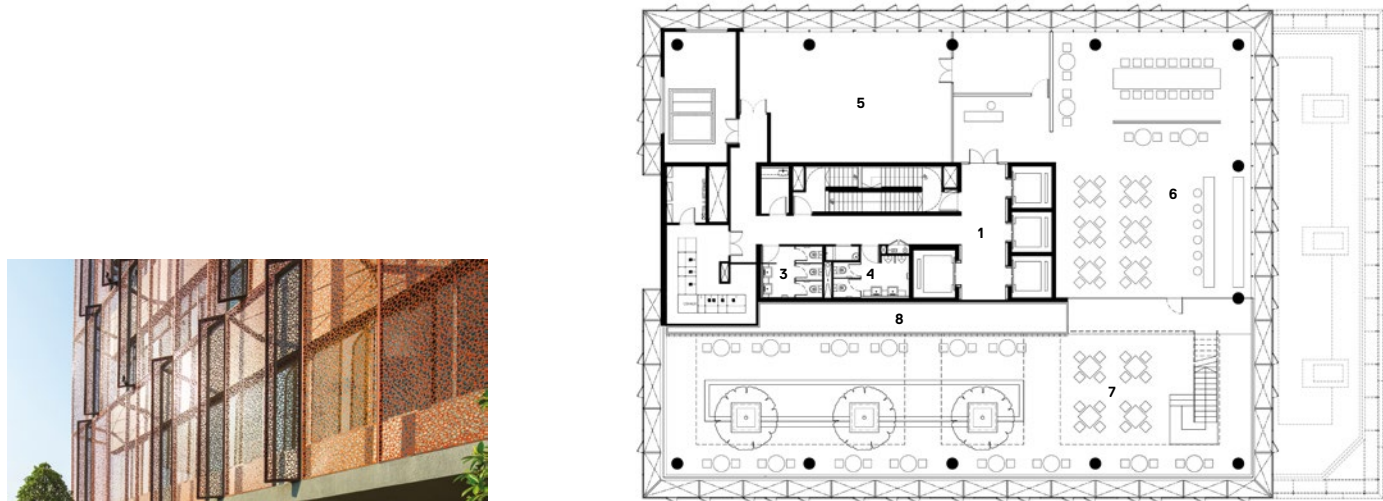
Left: President Place’s distinctive facade makes it stand out within Ho Chih Minh’s District 1

Top Right: The building is expressed as two interlocking cuboids with different facade treatments

Bottom Right: Office workers look through rust-coloured screens for sweeping views of the city



2ND TO 8TH STOREY PLAN



13TH STOREY PLAN

LEGEND
1 Lift Lobby | 2 Office | 3 Female Toilet | 4 Male Toilet |
5 Main Kitchen | 6 Restaurant | 7 Terrace | 8 Planter Box



“OUR GOAL WAS TO CREATE A BUILDING THAT WOULD PUNCH ABOVE ITS WEIGHT [BY PERFORMING AS] SOMETHING NOTABLE DESPITE ITS MODEST SIZE.”

» HANS BROUWER

Top: A sky garden atop the roof of the lower block is a casual, communal spaces for office workers

Bottom: Aerofoil louvres signal a different, greener view than their rust-coloured counterparts



the city’s planning requirements that directed the massing strategy for the building. Brouwer explains that “the two-part cuboid” came about in response to planning regulations, which required the building to step back after the ninth floor. We took this as an opportunity to develop the ‘cube’ concept, where the most prime areas of the building – those with the best views of the park – are expressed with a different envelope design.”

The formal result is an interesting typological variation to typical podium and tower block resolutions seen all too commonly today. The shear seam between the two volumes is cleverly articulated by a sky garden on the ninth storey, exploiting the building’s height to afford users a generous sweep of the surrounding area.

The sky garden also provides users with a close-up view of the meticulously-crafted perforated screens that clad the taller of two volumes. “[The perforated screen] was a tricky piece of design. We wanted to achieve a good balance of solidity when viewed from the outside, and transparency when viewed from the inside. This involved looking at a lot of different perforation patterns, opening sizes and percentages of solid to void,” says Brouwer.

This attention to detail was worth the effort,

apparent from the interesting pattern of shadows within the interiors of the office spaces. The porosity of the skin is sufficient to allow views out, without compromising the building’s exterior surface texture when viewed from a distance. This serves the programmatic layout of office spaces well as they are arranged to line the skin of the building, thereby maximising natural light and views. Notably, the lower volume has been rendered in horizontal chrome aerofoil louvres – a stark contrast to the distinctive rust-coloured perforated aluminium panels of the adjacent volume.

Overall, the project stands out as one of high ambition, particularly in the context of its site and scale. Brouwer’s approach and motivation for the project may be explained by his background. He shares candidly, “Coming from [managing] projects with Foster + Partners to running my own very small practice and working in Asia made me re-assess many things. Instead of working on world-class buildings with [accomplished] consultant teams, high aspirations and generous budes, I was working on modest projects with limited budgets and consultant support. I was forced to re-calibrate many things and also learn how to run a business.”

PRESIDENT PLACE

ARCHITECTURE FIRM HB Design Pte Ltd
PROJECT TEAM Hans Brouwer (director), Suchera Ekpanyapong (associate)
SUBMITTING ARCHITECT NPH Consultants
BUILDER CotecCons Group
C&S ENGINEER HBP Engineering
M&E ENGINEER ICE Indochine Engineering
QUANTITY SURVEYOR WT Partnership
LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR Element Design Studio Pte Ltd

TIME TO COMPLETE 24 Months
TOTAL FLOOR AREA 11,475sqm

HB DESIGN
(65) 6476 1323 hbdesign.biz

FINISHES
Generally Throughout, Glazing from Quan Dat, Sinh Nam Metal (Vietnam) and Phu Phong Corporation, Tiles and Stones from Viet Stone Industry, Facade from Vien Thanh and Hunter Douglas.

FIXED AND FITTED
Generally Throughout, Sanitary Ware from American Standard, Cotto-EHome and Vien Thanh, Door Hardware from Vien Thanh and Hafele Vina.

American Standard (08) 3820 5760/ (1900) 54 54 60 amstd.com.vn
Cotto-EHome (04) 3766 6909 ehome.com.vn
Hafele Vina (08) 3957 3166 hafele.com.vn
Phu Phong Corporation (08) 3750 5932 phu phong.com
Quan Dat (08) 3717 6781 quandatco.com
Sinh Nam Metal (Vietnam) (08) 3517 8242 hoaitu@sinhnam.com
Tien Phong (08) 3813 0268 tienphongstone.com.vn
Vien Thanh (08) 3821 8085 ext.140 aimup.com
Viet Stone Industry (08) 5412 0755 vietstoneindustry.com

Top: Selected screens can be opened and add an additional layer of texture to the facade