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LEARNING

MINISTRY OF DESIGN'S future-forward education space caters to the increased need for 'robotics literacy'

SINGAPORE – With global spending on robotics growing by 17 per cent a year, what does the age of automation mean for designers? The answer must be complex, to say the least, but Ministry of Design's new facility for robot manufacturer PBA Singapore gives us a few hints. Called Race (Robotics Application Centre for Excellence), the space aims to further the introduction of robots into industry by providing an arena for demonstrating their potential and for educating robot engineers and 'mid-level career-changing professionals'.

The interior needed to be as flexible as the robots themselves, forming a single space but conducive to hosting several small groups, explains MOD's Colin Seah. A 'second skin, deconstructing the ceiling and wall planes into an array of dazzling facets', achieves the required balance. The aluminium-tube cladding of the facets also acts as camouflage for unsightly mechanics. 'The main consideration in designing for the robots,' he says, 'was access to supplies of electricity, data and compressed air.'

Seah recounts that Race was a learning experience for MOD. 'We previously discussed the use of robotics in hotels and offices that we designed, but this is our first fully fledged robotics-centred project. As far as design goes, we focused on creating a future-forward vibe and atmosphere that would make people excited and enthused – instead of fearful.' – JS

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