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ABOUT

FACE TO FACE SIGNALS A DESIRE

FACE



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PHOTOGRAPHY EDWARD
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DESIGN MINISTRY OF DESIGN
LOCATION SINGAPORE
PROJECT FACE TO FACE

FOR HUMAN ENGAGEMENT IN A TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN WORLD





Face to Face is apbcOffices' latest addition to their High Street serviced office location, which provides clients in Singapore with a meeting place that is unique and the first of its kind in Asia. Unlike conventional offices, serviced offices usually target short-term leases. They come fully furnished and tenants have access to office and communication equipment, office infrastructure, as well as other services relating to administration, cleaning and maintenance. This model is very similar to serviced apartments, except that it applies to offices.

When designing an office, a designer usually attempts to create something that reflects the client company, taking cues from the nature of the business perhaps, or from some company icon. But when it comes to serviced offices, how does a designer create something that is versatile enough to accommodate any client and business without being too generic or lacking in identity?

The key lies in identifying a common ground - what is it that all clients do and need, regardless of their businesses? "The answer is interaction, and with Face to Face, we set out to re-define the experience of interaction by taking a whole new approach towards conventional office spaces, such as the reception, meeting areas, lounges and even the mailroom,"

explains Colin Seah, Design Director and founder of Ministry of Design, the firm behind not just the façade and interiors, but also the branding, collateral, and art direction on uniforms and website for Face to Face.

Tony Chen, CEO of apbcOffices, also shares this creative approach. "Being a trendsetter in the serviced offices industry, we strive to challenge the norm and come up with innovative concepts and solutions," says Chen. "Our clients are people who recognise the value that inspiring work environments bring to their businesses."

From outside, the sleek, black and white façade - a tree that seemingly grows from the pavement - and five-foot-way naturally attract the attention of visitors without any signage. The vertical fins on the façade continue into the interior, reinforcing the central idea of drawing people in. This culminates in the Magnet Bar, a 10-metre long sculptural bar that incorporates not just a reception counter, but a concierge that personifies the Face to Face concept and takes care of every client's and visitor's needs. The Bar is also where clients can hold informal discussions or simply take a coffee break. Fabricated from a single piece of solid surface, cast in-situ to achieve a seamless installation, its sinuous form takes centre stage on the first storey. Tongue-in-cheek elements such as a chess-board and a miniature Zen garden remind people that work and play are not mutually exclusive.

Behind the Magnet Bar are storage compartments and mailboxes housed within angled wall panels. These are ingeniously designed to conceal any clutter; all you will see from the front are whimsical white-on-black graphics depicting people, animals and trees. Unlike mailrooms that are typically tucked away in a remote corner, this is one that transforms a mundane task into an opportunity for impromptu exchanges. Further on, access to the basement is through an informal

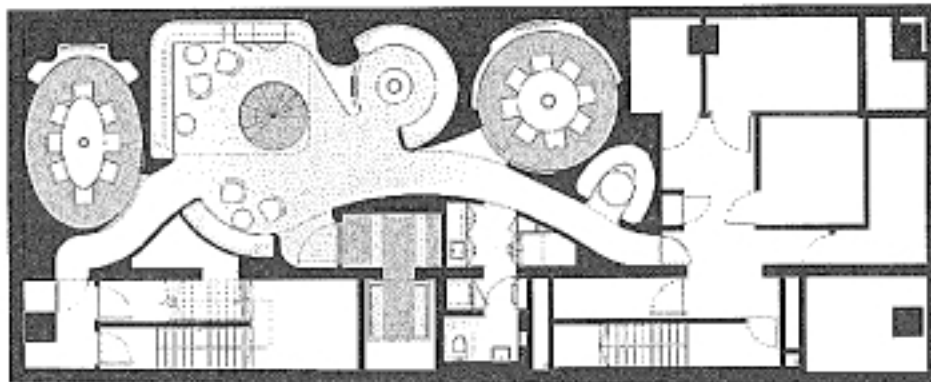


PREVIOUS PAGES The break-out space at the bottom of the stairs transforms into more formal meeting spaces

ABOVE A pod-shaped meeting space

ABOVE RIGHT A black feature wall with playful white graphics conceals display niches and mailboxes

RIGHT Plans (Basement and Level 0)





“We set out to re-define the experience of interaction”

COLIN SEAH, MINISTRY OF DESIGN



spiral staircase, instead of the usual austere dog-leg or straight flight. The descent transports you into a more insulated realm compared to the entry level above, and the coolness of the predominantly white colour scheme with black and grey accents reflects its subterranean location. This basement area is conducive for more deliberate and planned kinds of interaction, such as scheduled meetings. Formal meetings can be held within the meeting rooms, while informal discussions can take place in break-out areas casually interspersed between rooms. Most of these take on a circular, pod-like form that lends itself naturally to engaging all participants.

Within the controlled black and white palette used in Face to Face are variations in materials and textures – glossy versus matte or smooth versus rough – so that even black-on-black or white-on-white works. Seah confides that “this colour combination is not usually the most popular within the Asian work context but the client was game so we pushed through with it.”

True to its boutique concept, Face to Face is apbcOffices’ attempt at taking a utilitarian serviced office and giving their clients more than just a functional work space.

Lynn Tan is a freelance writer based in Singapore.

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“Our clients are people who recognise the value that inspiring work environments bring to their businesses”

TONY CHEN, apbcOffices



FACE TO FACE

OVERALL DESIGN Ministry of Design
PROJECT TEAM Colin Seah, Wu Kangsheng, Cheryl Lum, Danis Sia, Dennis Cheok, Roberto Rivera, Bryan Law
PROJECT ARCHITECT 7 Workshop
UNIFORM DESIGN Neptune Workwear
CONTRACTOR Sinwah Timber Builders
CLIENT apbcOffices

TIME TO COMPLETE 10 weeks (construction)
TOTAL FLOOR AREA 500m²

MINISTRY OF DESIGN
 (65) 6222 5780 modonline.com

FURNITURE In Basement, chairs and coffee tables from Eco Furniture, and Conference Room tables by Sinwah Timber Builders. On First Floor, reception counter and bar by Luxx Newhouse.

FINISHES In Lobby and Reception, floor is black self-leveling epoxy by SKK. Generally throughout, custom carpet from UMI Carpeting, paint from SKK and Sinwah Timber Builders, and black pebbles from Sinwah Timber Builders.

LIGHTING Lighting throughout from Sinwah Timber Builders.

Eco Furniture (85 21) 5219 7408 Luxx Newhouse (85) 6324 6860 luxxnewhouse.com Sinwah Timber Builders (85) 9151 0537 SKK (65) 6274 0020 skk.com.sg UMI Carpeting (85) 6238 7111 umicarpet.com.sg

LEFT The monochrome theme is carried through to the tree-inspired façade
ABOVE The feature wall sits behind a sculptural bar that doubles as reception