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INDESIGN

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OFFICE BY HBO+EMTB*

*ZARCH COLLABORATIVES
CONSIDERS THE
SINGAPORE IDENTITY*

*VILLA S BY LINGHAO
ARCHITECTS*

*HERMAN MILLER SHOP-
IN-SHOP BY P.A.C.*

The Galen Retrofit

*FORMWERKZ ARCHITECTS CHALLENGES THE ARCHETYPAL
OFFICE LOBBY IN A PILOT PROJECT BY ASCENDAS*



8 886385 903073

AUG/SEP 2012 | \$58.00

Editor's Note.



WE'RE MAKING PROGRESS.

Architecture and design in Singapore, I mean. But my reason for celebration has less to do with the architects and designers who have undoubtedly contributed to the landscape – we all know their efforts in pushing architecture forward have been nothing short of herculean – and more to do with the client. I'm talking about the non-architect – the decision-makers in corporate offices taking a chance on design, the everyday man giving new spatial proposals a go in their daily lives.

When I first saw The Galen Retrofit project (*Working Experiment*, page 74), my first reaction was to laud Formwerkz Architects who are surely deserving of recognition for approaching the office lobby redesign with true innovation and a non-conformist bravado. But perhaps equally deserving of applause is the fact that the client, Ascendas, often seen as a straight-laced business space solutions provider, mooted the pilot project for an alternative office lobby that could possibly be applied to its properties across Asia. Better still, they didn't back off when presented with a concept that was unfamiliar and, perhaps, a little odd at first.

It's always cause for celebration when design innovation is initiated by the client. The impact is multiplied many times over when the client is a corporate giant; it affects how hundreds, indeed thousands, of people feel

and behave in these spaces. And in Singapore, corporate suits are starting to take that crucial step beyond stoic commercial spaces. For the architect and designer, it means gaining greater breadth for creative solutions and fewer struggles in getting ideas heard and, hopefully, picked up.

Of course, nudging on the part of the architect and designer is always required. Firms like Ministry of Design (MOD) often help clients cross that elusive margin between good and great by proposing designs that eschew convention. Even in temporary projects like its design for the UOL Edge Gallery, opportunities were exploited for exploration towards an alternative type of show suite (*Selling Edge*, page 90).

Does the fact that all the units were snapped up within a week have anything to do with the unique way that the show units were presented? Maybe, and maybe not. But if a client were to err, it would perhaps be safer to err on the side of caution. In design speak, that would mean, most ironically, taking a gander outside the confines of convention. Local companies UOL Group Limited and Ascendas did it. We're predicting that a lot more will follow suit.

Rachel Lee-Leong
EDITOR

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On the Cover

The Galen Retrofit (p.74)



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Selling Edge —

Text by Luo Jingmei
Images courtesy of MOD, photography by Edward Hendricks, CI&A Photography

Not one for accepting conventions,
Ministry of Design designs a new way of selling apartments



CORNER MARKER:
Framed by large Tembusu trees,
the Edge Gallery begets curiosity
and attention



SLIM PERSPECTIVES:
Pedestrians are accorded
glimpses into the gallery via
narrow glass slits



But the new *Edge Gallery* designed by *Ministry of Design* (MOD) is deserving of a double take. It was commissioned by *United Overseas Land (UOL)* to market *Katong Regency*, a 224-unit residential development with a six-storey retail podium by *SAA Architects*. With its bold, unapologetic form and stark, jagged surface, it looks more like a gallery than a temporary structure for commercial purposes.

“[Despite their sculptural forms], most of our projects have evolved from either a very surprisingly typological response or a challenging site,” says *Colin Seah*, founder and director of design of MOD. In this case, it tackled both aspects.

It is situated at the tip of the development with the only drop off point, an existing taxi stand, 30m away and had both the advantage and disadvantage of facing a busy junction. The most obvious response to make use of this road frontage would be a curve. “But it’s hard to build curves for contemporary buildings and inside, that would be very hard to rationalise,” explains Seah. “So what we did was make the ‘curve’ from a series of L-shaped sharp edges – hence the name ‘Edge Gallery’.”

Glass panels inserted into these bends are angled away from oncoming traffic while allowing for light and views both

We see them almost every day
– banal, white wall-and-glass boxes,
plastered every sightline possible with flags
and posters. A kind of non-architecture, the
ubiquitous show gallery has rarely differed
from such a model, save for slight variations
in materiality and size.



STRAIGHT EDGED:
The angular edges of the show unit balconies echo the jagged edges of the gallery's exterior

still approximate the feeling that it's a balcony unit above ground level? One of the selling points of this development was the units' [unique] balcony design, so we knew we needed the height."

The airy atrium on the first storey houses discussion and exhibition areas. A grand, ziggurat-like staircase leads visitors to the show units on the second storey overlooking the double-volume space. Offices and other ancillary facilities are tucked beneath.

"One of the comments was that it feels very institutional; there's a sort of grandeur about it," shares Seah. This is as much fuelled by the overall sense of spaciousness and minimal, monochrome palette, as a strong sense of movement and energy created by the way the stone flooring and light fixtures were laid.

For Seah, such details exude a sense of sophistication without needing to resort to expensive materials. "If you look at the most expensive material, it's maybe the glass. The flooring is just granite, which is not an expensive stone. But I think the value comes not so much from your obvious luxuries but from something that is almost free if you do it well, which is the sense of space and the poetics of the space." He elaborates regarding the

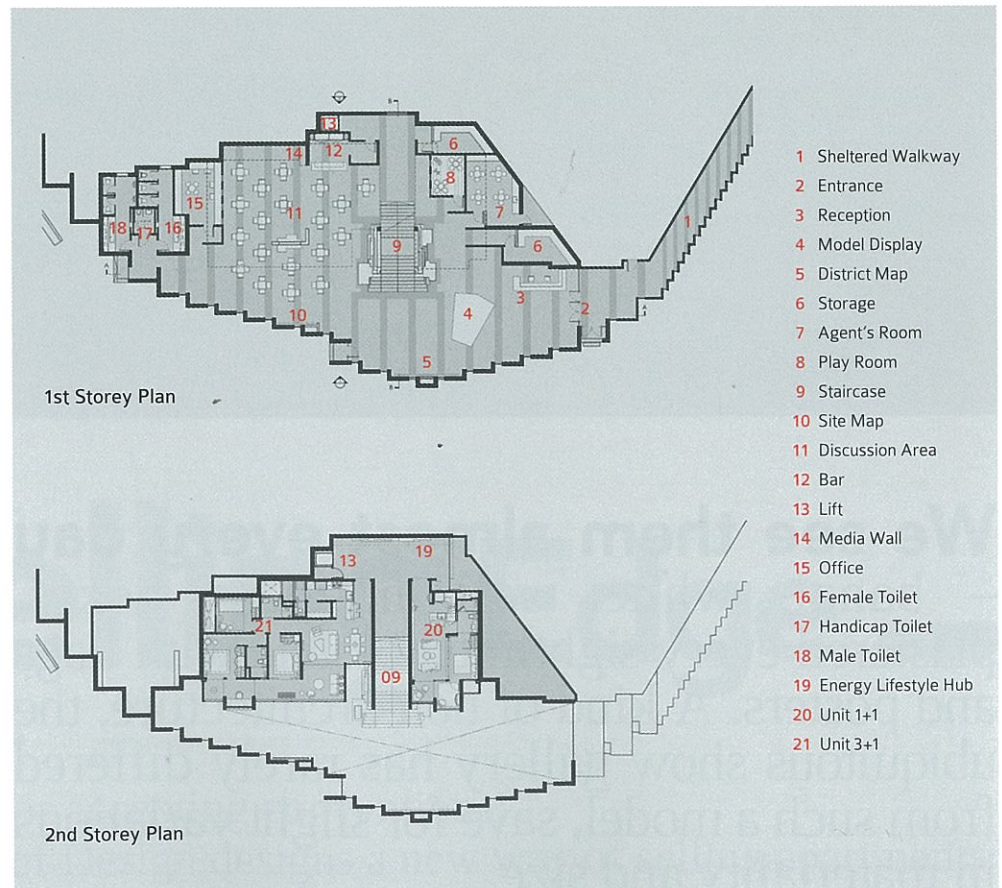


FRAMING THE GREEN:
Views of the greenery outside filters into the interior

ways. Functionally, entry portals can be neatly introduced without breaking the overall rhythm simply by extending the width of the bends. Furthermore, visitors entering from the drop off point are given an impressive arrival experience as they walk through the avenue of punctured views before arriving at the double storey interior.

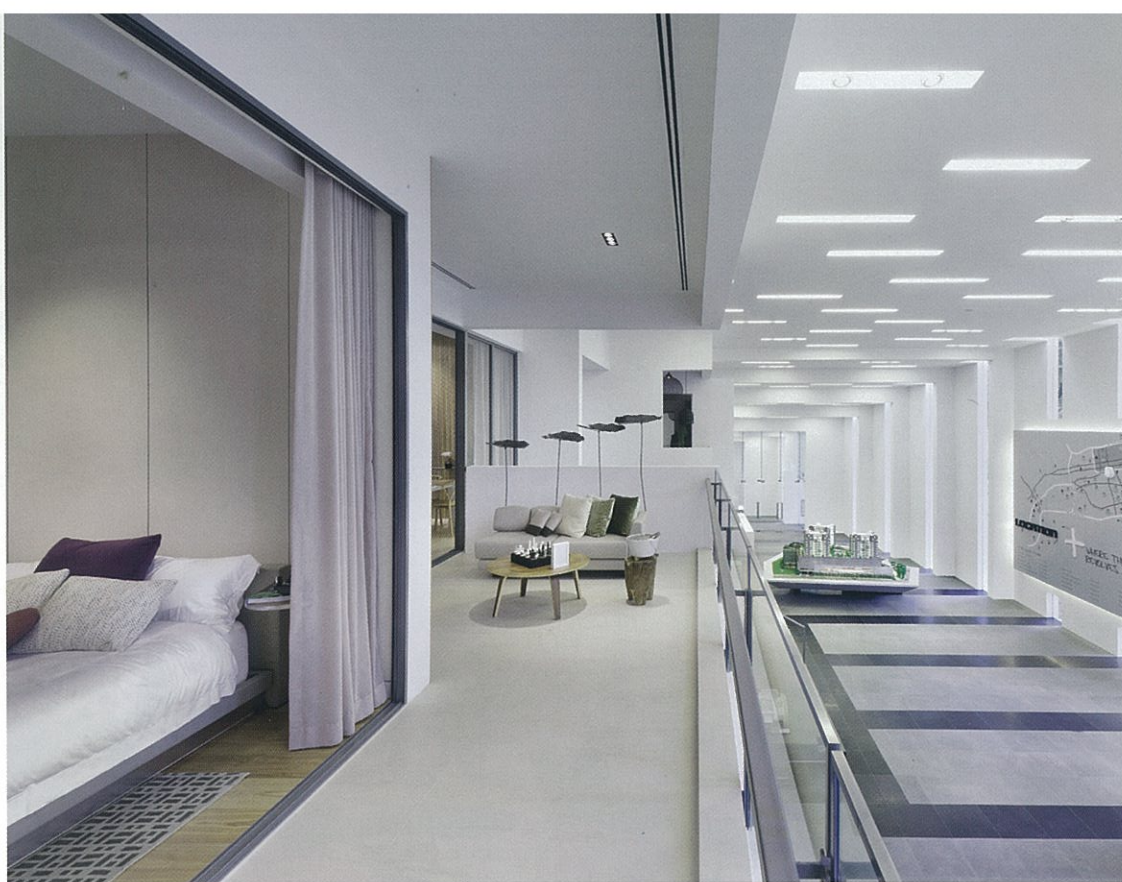
The building's climbing gradient – lower at the edges and up to seven metres in the middle – was also a highly rationalised one. The show units in the middle of the gallery are raised to stimulate high-rise living, and taper off at the sides where the extra height is not necessary.

This is another way the Edge Gallery sets a precedent for the selling of condominium apartments. "It attempts to answer the question 'How do you sell an apartment in a show gallery but



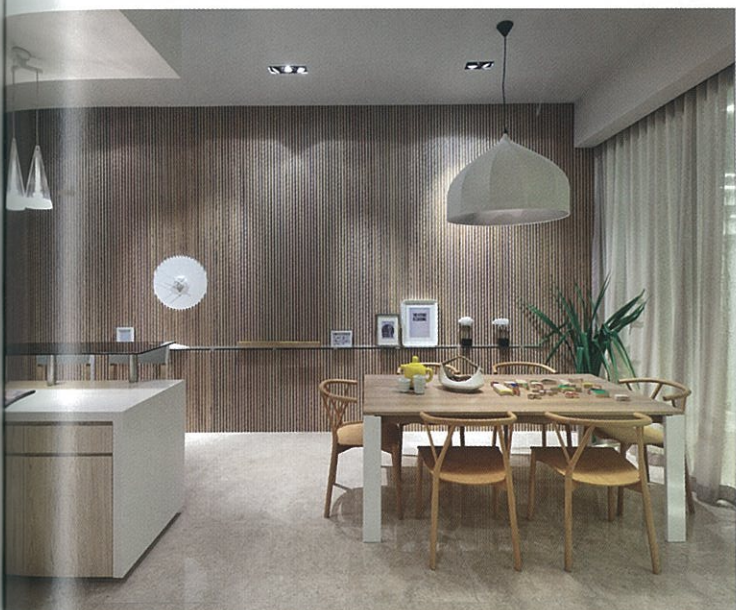
patterns, “I think your mind or senses is arrested by this order. It’s like jazz, where there’s order but unpredictability.”

Down to the marketing paraphernalia, every aspect of the building’s design has been tightly controlled. “We had to really debate the notion of what marketing a development comprises. Typically, it’s very direct where you have these images of the project [on the façade]. There’s a place for that, but is it on this building? Can this building serve a different function? Can it exude a sense of sophistication that brings the marketing of



↑ **TOP VIEW:**
The show units on the second storey evoke a sense of being elevated

← **RICH TACTILITY:**
A pared-down sense of luxury is created in the show units with warm materials and well-designed furniture



this development a notch higher? Can [the marketing] be much more subtle?”

Surprisingly, the clients understood this and curtailed exterior signage to two billboards at the edges of the building. The main façade was kept free of any such material. “They really appreciated the sense of space but it was not something they’ve done before so they were a bit unfamiliar. But later I heard that it had received very positive reception and they want to use it as a new model for similar kinds of projects where appropriate,” beams Seah, adding that the structure has been removed following 100 per cent sales of the development within the first week of the launch. ♦

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UOL EDGE GALLERY

Architect Ministry of Design

Project Team Colin Seah, Tulsi Grover, Joyce Low, Angie Ng, Anita Shewchuk, Ron Sim, David Tan, Marcin Skolimowski, Noel Banta, Aliza Suarez, Lolleth Alejandro, Allan Veloso

Main Contractor Techkon Pte Ltd

ID Contractor DHdeco Pte Ltd

C&S Consultant TEP Consultants

M&E Consultant J Roger Preston

Quantity Surveyor Rider Levett Bucknall

Submissions Architect SAA Architects

Time to Construct 7 months

Total Floor Area 910sqm

Ministry of Design (65) 6222 5780 modonline.com

Furniture In Dining Area, ‘Blama’ Dining Table and ‘Valerie’ Chair from Grafunkt. In Balcony, B&B Italia ‘Canasta’ Armchair from Space Furniture.

Lighting Generally throughout, lighting from Bizlink Lighting. In Dining Area, Moooi ‘Dome’ Light from Space Furniture.

Finishes Bell Art Façade Textured Spray Paint from SKK. Granite and Marble Flooring from Surface Stone. Broadloom Carpet Strips from Networks Contract. Paint from ICI Dulux. Solid Surface from Luxx Newhouse, Laminate from Admira.

Admira (65) 63680123 admira.sg Bizlink (65) 6747 7116 bizlink-lighting.com ICI Dulux (65) 62650677 dulux.com.sg Grafunkt (65) 6338 3248 grafunkt.com Luxx Newhouse (65) 6324 6860 luxxnewhouse.com Networks Contract (65) 63431211 networkflor.com SKK (65) 6274-0020 skk.com.sg Space Furniture (65) 6415 0000 spacefurniture.com.sg Surface Stone (65) 6281 7800 surfacestone.com.sg