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THE RAFFLES CONVERSATION

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MICHAEL SPLINTER** | 8-9

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Tharman rules himself out | 5

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'No' vote by Greeks
will isolate country | 27



GREXIT SAGA

Tsipras wants 30% debt haircut

IN a television address, Greece's embattled prime minister also calls for "a 20-year grace period" for the rest, to ensure "the viability of debt" in the country. | 6

SLICK ENTERPRISE

Total opens huge lubricant plant

FULLY operational by year-end, the Tuas facility will double the company's lubricant production in Singapore and increase its regional capacity by 30 per cent. | 7

KEY STRATEGY

Perennial bets on China healthcare

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BANKING WOES

Citigroup, HSBC in Brazil probe

THEY are among 15 banks that are under investigation for currency manipulation by the country's antitrust agency after similar probes in the US and Europe led to penalties of more than US\$10 billion. | 17

Tech workplaces get makeover for cool vibe

Firms say workplaces that look more like home than cubicle farms inspire creativity and pride

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Singapore

TECH companies here now are paying more attention than ever before to the physical environment of their work spaces, spending good money to build "cool" offices, in the process bolstering the global office furniture market.

And research firm CSIL has found that this market is no small potatoes; it is worth US\$47 billion, and Singapore is one of 60 lead players.

Michael Ptacek, founder of OfficeLovin, a Prague-based website showcasing the world's most inspiring tech-company offices, said: "Tech offices today look like apartments. More have moved away from cold, corporate-like interiors to cosy and hipsterish spaces. We see lots of wood, collaboration zones and recreation rooms with ping pong tables."

Vinnie Lauria, managing partner of Golden Gate Ventures (GGV), said the tech scene in particular is unlike any other in that they work at coming up with creative solutions to problems while using any space available – garages, shophouses and even living rooms.

Taking GGV as an example, he likened its culture to that of a Silicon Valley startup – comfortable, informal and with a relatively flat structure. Its two-storey shophouse unit in Duxton Road does not have a private office for the chief executive; its open concept



'LIKE A COOL COFFEE SHOP'

Venture capital firm Golden Gate Ventures has an open concept, a couch for meetings, a bare-brick wall, cement floors and open ceilings. PHOTO: SHAWN TEO

and big couch used for meetings are designed for people to feel relaxed and to speak their minds, he added.

About S\$30,000 went into reverting the space from a mass of office cubicles to what it originally was. Mr Lauria said: "When we first took over, there were drop ceilings and office carpeting – two things that kill the creative spirit. Now, the cement floors, open ceilings and an exposed brick wall give the office a raw feeling, like a cool coffee shop instead of a cubicle farm."

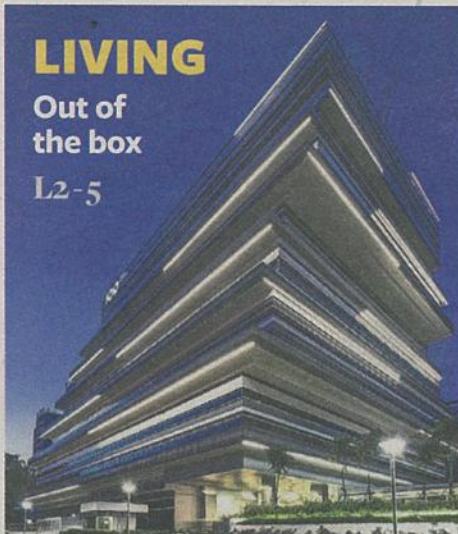
In like manner, the office of digital story-book creator Paperplane has nailed the look – from its handmade pendant lights and coffee table upcycled from wooden pallets down to the squiggly, colourful paint on its floors. The startup spent some S\$15,000 in renovations, the result of which reflects its creative, collaborative, hands-on and playful culture, said its founder Chrissy Lim.

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LIVING

Out of
the box

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BT Living

THE BUSINESS TIMES WEEKEND JULY 4-5 2015

OUT OF THE BOX

Singapore architects take on traditional forms and rise to the challenge

L2-5

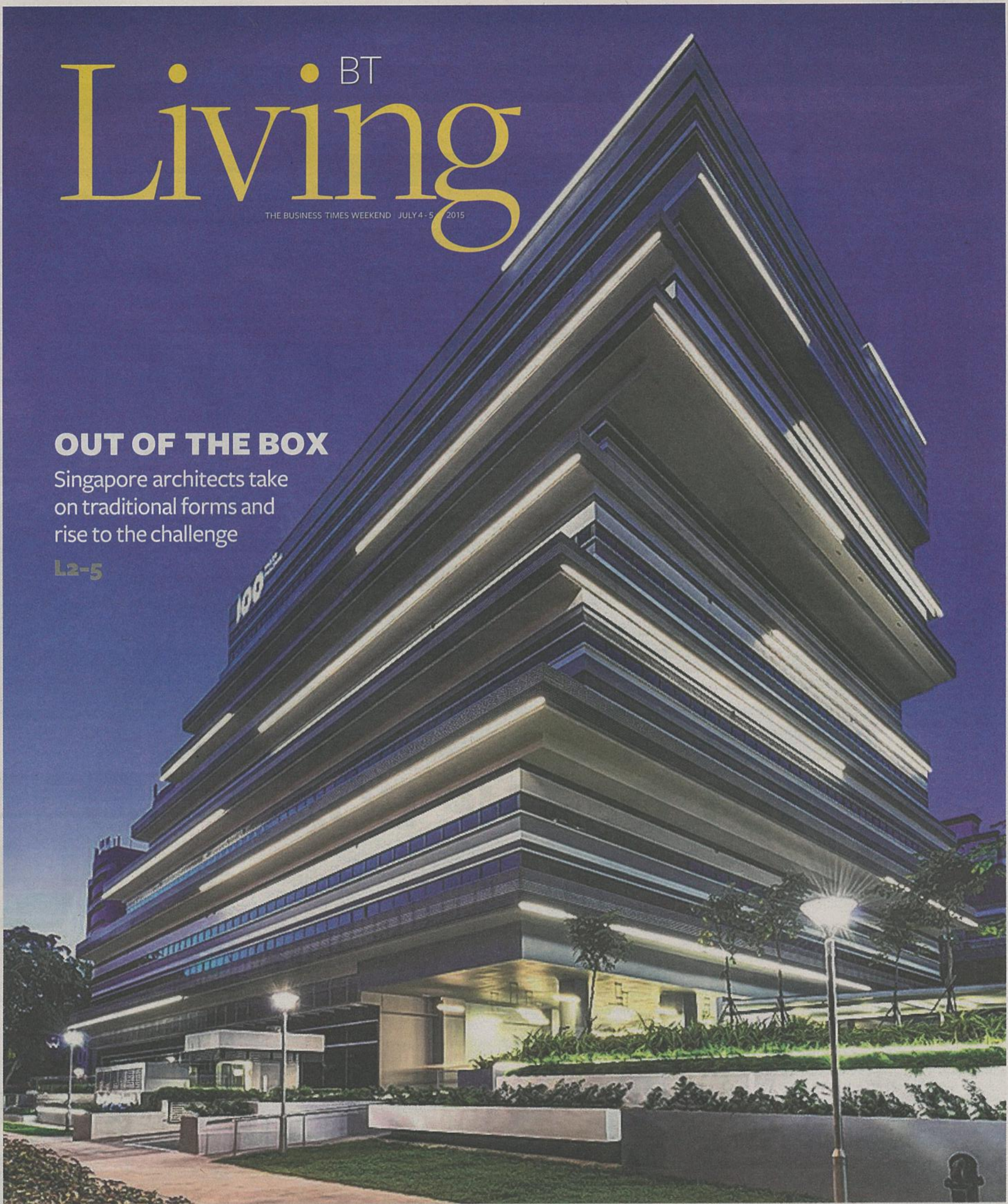


PHOTO: 100PP by MINISTRY OF DESIGN

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NO HOLDS BARRED

Destiny says it's Chile's time L16

100PP Ministry of Design

SAY 'office building' and most people will immediately associate it with typical glass-cladded structure. But not the folks at Ministry of Design (MOD) who had different ideas for 100 PP, an office building in Pasir Panjang.

Located in a light industrial area, 100PP exploits its sea-front view with a series of "stepped" balconies across the different floor levels. The balconies make the building look as if it's shifting away from the busy elevated highway in front of it.

The building was also shifted laterally to create a sense of depth with a series of dynamic blocks stacked one above the other rather than a static singular block. It also gives the building a unique profile against the skyline.

Rather than a plain exterior, the facade here comprises a number of different elements which the team bound together aesthetically: primarily the windows, balconies and air-conditioning ledges.

"We have intentionally blurred the definition of each element by layering a series of horizontal stripes throughout the fa-

cade," says Colin Seah, founder of MOD. The stripes generate visual movement horizontally across the building and also emphasize the shifting and stacked nature of the different volumes.

A palette of grey is employed to generate the variety of tones required for the horizontal banding. This horizontal striping is also applied consistently to the landscape and hardscape elements surrounding the building.

Inside the building, the bold use of feature lighting, materials and environmental graphics across the different floors, gives the space an industrial aesthetic look. There is also a roof top garden space overlooking the sea.

Even the building name as a cool ring to it. An abbreviation of its address 100 Pasir Panjang, the name 100PP is both informative and evocative of an energetic and contemporary environment. Symbolically, the number 100 alludes to perfection and completeness, says Mr Seah.

He adds: "100PP blurs the boundaries between predictable commercial space and gritty industrial space, creating instead a hybrid space, which offers an exciting alternative for the creative workplace."



BLURRING BOUNDARIES

The 100PP building was shifted laterally to create a sense of depth with a series of dynamic blocks stacked one above the other rather than a static singular block. Inside, the bold use of feature lighting, materials and environmental graphics gives the space an industrial aesthetic look.