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SEAB

SOUTHEAST ASIA BUILDING

January / February 2026

In This Issue

Adaptive Reuse Architecture

Conservation Interior Design • Revitalised Shophouses, Temples, and Colonial Buildings in Southeast Asia • Expert Insight – Conservation Laws & Design / Smart Cities • Vertical Greenery

ON THE COVER: St. Joseph's Church / Singapore

ISSN 2345-7066

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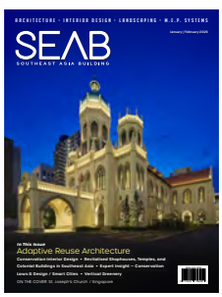

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ISSN 2345-7074 (E-periodical)

Trade Link Media Pte Ltd also publishes:
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SOUTHEAST ASIA BUILDING is published bi-monthly by:
Trade Link Media Pte Ltd, 1 Paya Lebar Link, #04-01, Paya Lebar Quarter 1 (PLQ 1), Singapore 408533
Tel : +65 6842 2580
Editorial e-mail: seab@tradelinkmedia.com.sg
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Welcome to the January/ February issue!

I hope everyone has had a restful holiday period! Architecture and interior design are always on the move, so let's review what this issue has in store.

The overarching theme of this issue is conservation! This is reflected in our exploration of adaptive reuse architecture, conservation interior design, and various revitalized buildings in Southeast Asia. This is a fascinating topic, and I hope that by shedding light on some regional projects, people can come to appreciate the importance of refurbishment in design.

In our expert insight section, we speak to industry leaders about both conservation laws in design and building smart cities. We also examine vertical greenery projects, exploring how they bring both enclosed and open spaces to life.

Thank you as always for reading! See you in the next issue.

An Jee-Hyun

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- **Architecture:** Technology-Driven Architecture
- **Lead Feature:** AI, BIM, and Digital Twins — The future of building design and management
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Society of Interior Designers (Singapore)

The Hong Kong Institute of Architects

Vietnam Green Building Council

Green Institute Nepal

Interior Designers Association of Nepal

Singapore Institute of Building Limited

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Hilton Partners with Brighton Corporation to Debut Curio Collection by Hilton in Kyoto

Hilton (NYSE: HLT) announced the signing of its second Curio Collection by Hilton hotel in Japan in partnership with Brighton Corporation Co., Ltd. The Kyoto Brighton Hotel will convert under Curio Collection by Hilton and is scheduled to open in the winter of 2028.

Brighton Corporation currently operates four hotels, including Kyoto Brighton Hotel and Urayasu Brighton Hotel Tokyo Bay, and has a long-standing track record in hotel management in Kyoto. Upon completion of a full renovation, the newly rebranded hotel will mark the entry of the Curio Collection by Hilton into the city, featuring approximately 160 guest rooms, four dining outlets, including Kyoto-style kaiseki cuisine, a banquet space accommodating up to 240 guests, and a fitness centre. Brighton Corporation will continue to manage the hotel.

Kyoto Brighton Hotel joins a portfolio of more than 190 individually remarkable hotels under Curio Collection by Hilton, each hand-picked for curious travellers seeking distinct design, world-class dining, and immersive experiences backed by the benefits and hospitality of Hilton.

In Japan, the first Curio Collection by Hilton hotel opened in Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture, in 2018. Curio Collection by Hilton has also recently debuted in Thailand at KROMO Bangkok and in China at Secan Hotel Qingdao.

"Hilton is expanding its footprint in Kyoto, where we currently operate five hotels under four brands. The launch of Curio Collection by Hilton in Kyoto—a city that enjoys immense popularity both domestically and internationally—will meet the diverse needs of travellers and marks an exciting new chapter for Hilton in the city," said Hirohisa Fujimoto, vice president, development, Japan & Micronesia, Hilton. "Each Curio Collection by Hilton hotel provides a unique connection to sought-after destinations, offering guests memorable experiences that allow them to discover the local charm throughout their stay. In partnership with Brighton Corporation, which has extensive experience in hotel management in Kyoto, we look forward to welcoming guests with exceptional hospitality."

Tsutomu Yasuda, president, Brighton Corporation Co., Ltd, commented, "We are delighted to sign a franchise agreement between Brighton Corporation and Hilton, a global leader in the hospitality industry. The Curio Collection brand, with its emphasis on distinct character and strong local connections, aligns perfectly with the qualities and strengths of Kyoto Brighton Hotel. We believe this synergy will allow us to create a truly one-of-a-kind hotel that will satisfy guests from around the world. Through this partnership with Hilton, we aim to continue building a beloved hotel that leverages the experience and deep relationships that we have cultivated with the local community over the years."

Curio Collection by Hilton is part of Hilton Honors, the award-winning guest loyalty programme for Hilton's 25 world-class brands. Hilton Honors members who book directly through preferred Hilton channels receive access to instant benefits, including a flexible payment slider, an exclusive member discount, and free standard Wi-Fi.

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Deluxe Systems Opens First Singapore Showroom: A Creative Hub for Italian Luxury Windows and Doors in ASEAN

Deluxe Systems, the pioneering Italian brand of luxury windows and doors, has opened its first exclusive retail showroom in Singapore, marking a significant milestone in its international expansion.

Located at 61 Ubi Ave 1, #02-02 UB Point, Singapore 408941, the new space positions Singapore as the beating heart of Italian design excellence in Southeast Asia.

A key bridge to Southeast Asia

The Singapore showroom serves as both a showcase of Italian craftsmanship and a strategic anchor for Deluxe Systems' regional growth. Renowned for its world-class architecture, high concentration of luxury developments, and discerning community of homeowners and designers, Singapore offers an ideal landscape for the brand's expansion.

"It's a place where we bring the finest Italian craftsmanship directly to our clients," said Germano Vitali, Director of Deluxe Systems. "For the first time in Southeast Asia, Italian window and door design, and culture are being showcased in a show unit. Here, architects and clients can truly experience the products—to see, touch, and feel what will become part of their projects."

A luxury residence, reimagined as a showroom

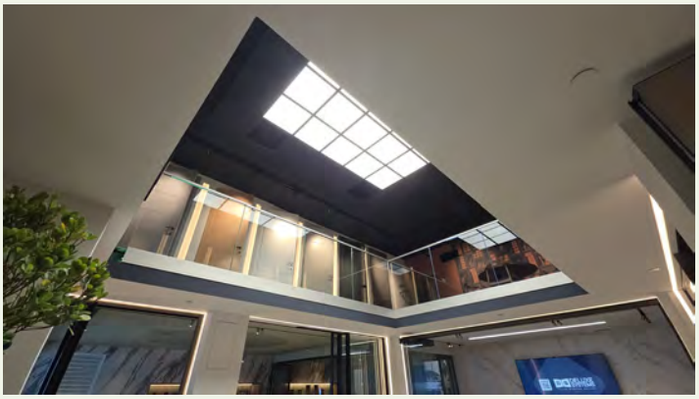
Going beyond an exhibition space, the Singapore showroom is designed as a microcosm of Italian living. Styled as a contemporary residence, it unfolds through a series of intimate environments—a kitchen, living room, dining room, and patio—where every door, window, and railing is presented as an architectural statement.

Its standout features include large sliding façades and folding systems that dissolve boundaries between indoor and outdoor spaces. This seamless transition between comfort and openness embodies Singapore's design-consciousness, where form and function meet tropical elegance.

Designated zones for Deluxe Systems' sub-brands

Deluxe Systems integrates seven Italian brands—Apexfine, Ponzio, Faraone, Flessya, Chirenti, Dimensione Serramenti, and MR Art Design—alongside its own signature lines. Each brand has an exclusive distribution contract in ASEAN with Deluxe Systems and is showcased in a dedicated zone that highlights the unique character and craftsmanship of its products.

Spanning 250 sqm on the ground level and 60 sqm on the mezzanine, the showroom features a curated layout: the ground floor presents



aluminium, glass, and PVC systems, while the upper floor showcases wooden and flush-to-wall doors, as well as railings. Every collection is displayed in its natural environment, allowing visitors to experience the products as they would in real homes and spaces.

The Deluxe Systems Singapore showroom is open by private appointment only. Visitors can request an appointment through the brand's official website at https://www.ds.asia/contact-us.

Green Building Award 2025 Award Presentation Dinner: Towards Carbon Neutrality • Excellence in Sustainable Built Environment

The Guest of Honour, Ms Bernadette LINN, JP, Secretary for Development, The Government of the HKSAR, together with government representatives, the chairmen and representatives from HKGBC and PGBC, Green Building Award 2025 Jurors, the Organising Committee and Scientific Committee Members, as well as the Green Building Award 2025 Sponsors and other distinguished guests joined together for a group photo after the kick-off ceremony.

The "Green Building Award 2025" (GBA 2025), co-organised by the Hong Kong Green Building Council (HKGBC) and the Professional Green Building Council (PGBC), held its Award Presentation Dinner on 13 November 2025 at the JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong. The event celebrated the glories of this edition's award-winning projects and organisations, while marking a significant milestone of the Award's tenth edition and

The Green Building Award 2025 was honoured to have Ms Bernadette LINN, JP, Secretary for Development, The Government of the HKSAR (middle), Dr CHEUNG Tin-cheung, SBS, Chairman of the HKGBC (2nd left), Ir Prof. YUEN Pak-leung, Chairman of PGBC (2nd right), Ar. Joel CHAN, Chairman of the GBA 2025 Organising Committee (1st left), and Ir Colin CHUNG, Chairman of the GBA 2025 Scientific Committee (1st right), at the award presentation ceremony as officiating guests and sharing their visions on the green building development in Hong Kong.

twentieth anniversary.

Over 500 industry elites from government, developers, construction companies, consulting firms, property management companies, academia, and professional organisations gathered to share insights on outstanding achievements in green building development.

The biennial GBA honours projects and organisations that demonstrate unwavering dedication and tireless efforts in creating sustainable built environments, making it one of the industry's most prestigious accolades. In its tenth edition, GBA 2025 adopted the theme "Towards Carbon Neutrality · Excellence in Sustainable Built Environment" and received 122 nominations, reflecting the industry's strong recognition of green building concepts and its firm commitment to advancing carbon neutrality. This showcases a collective spirit of the continuous pursuit of excellence.

Among the nominations, 99 outstanding projects and organisations were selected as finalists to compete across five categories: New Buildings, Existing Buildings, Research & Planning, Building Products & Technologies, and Green Building Leadership. This edition also features the "Special Citation on United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SGGs)" and a newly introduced "Special Citation on Green Financing", recognising remarkable contributions towards achieving the UN SDGs or promoting sustainable built environments through green finance.

As in previous editions, GBA 2025 was judged by a panel of renowned experts, including government representatives, industry professionals, and local and overseas academics. Ms Bernadette LINN, JP, Secretary for Development, The Government of the HKSAR, served as the Honorary Advisor for the Green Building Award 2025 and the Guest of Honour at the event. She officiated the kick-off ceremony alongside Ar. Joel CHAN, Chairman of the GBA 2025 Organising Committee, Dr CHEUNG Tin-cheung, SBS, Chairman of the Hong Kong Green Building Council, Ir Prof. YUEN Pak-leung, Chairman of the Professional Green Building Council, and Ir Colin CHUNG, Chairman of the GBA 2025 Scientific Committee, witnessing the industry's united efforts in promoting the development of the built environment.

This edition's winning projects and organisations span both private and public sectors, presenting 11 Green Building Leadership Pioneer Awards, 12 Grand Awards, 29 Merit Awards, 11 "Special Citation on United Nations Sustainable Development Goals", and 2 inaugural "Special Citation on Green Financing". Notably, the number of awardees for the Green Building Leadership Pioneer Awards and the "Special Citations on United Nations Sustainable Development Goals" reached a record high.

To honour and recognise excellence in exemplary leadership, the Pioneer Awards of Green Building Leadership were presented to Chinachem Group and Swire Properties Limited for Developers, Arup and Ronald Lu & Partners from Consultants, Henderson Land Development Company Limited and Nan Fung Property Management for Facilities Management, Gammon Construction Limited and Hip Hing Construction Company Limited for Contractors, Hong Kong Housing Society for Government, Institutions & NGOs and Hilti (Hong Kong) Limited, and K. Wah Construction Materials for Green Products & Technologies Business, commending their leading roles in driving the sustainable development of Hong Kong's built environment.

Green financing plays a pivotal role in channelling capital towards green building projects, enhancing sustainability throughout the entire building lifecycle, and improving environmental performance. The newly introduced "Special Citation on Green Financing" in this edition reflects the growing significance of sustainable finance in driving innovation and climate action within Hong Kong's built environment. This special recognition highlights the critical contribution of green finance in promoting sustainable development while commending outstanding building projects that demonstrate strong potential in adopting green financing mechanisms. The citation is awarded exclusively to Completed Projects under the New Buildings and Existing Buildings categories.

Ms Bernadette LINN, JP, Secretary for Development, The Government of the HKSAR, remarked, "This edition's theme emphasises the urgent need to achieve a sustainable future.

Ms Bernadette LINN, JP, Secretary for Development, The Government of the HKSAR (middle), served as the Honorary Advisor of the GBA 2025 and the Guest of Honour at the event. She officiated the kick-off ceremony alongside Dr CHEUNG Tin-cheung, SBS, Chairman of the HKGBC (2nd left), Ir Prof. YUEN Pak-leung, Chairman of PGBC (2nd right), Ar. Joel CHAN, Chairman of the GBA 2025 Organising Committee (1st left) and Ir Colin CHUNG, Chairman of the GBA 2025

To achieve this, we must establish partnerships and share knowledge, fostering innovative solutions and implementing strategies that reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainable practices throughout the whole building life-cycle. The synergy between green finance and green technology will accelerate the build-up of multi-faceted industry clusters. Green finance is at the forefront of green transformation for Hong Kong and is also crucial for achieving the targets of carbon neutrality. Tonight, we gather to celebrate the achievements of the Green Building Award 2025 recipients. The projects recognised exemplify innovation, creativity, and a commitment to environmental responsibility."

Ar. Joel CHAN, Chairman of the GBA 2025 Organising Committee, celebrated the achievement, noting, "Against the background of a growing global emphasis on green transformation, the GBA is celebrating its tenth edition this year. Over the past twenty years, a total of 662 innovative green building projects have been recognised, and 29 organisations have received the Pioneer Award for their outstanding contributions to promoting green building design. GBA 2025, with the theme "Towards Carbon Neutrality • Excellence in Sustainable Built Environment", acknowledges projects committed to achieving carbon neutrality, pledging to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and promoting innovative green finance. This edition not only continues past successes but also reaches new heights in participation and influence, confirming the industry's strong commitment to green innovation and sustainable development."

Dr CHEUNG Tin-cheung, SBS, Chairman of the Hong Kong Green Building Council, commented, "As the GBA enters its tenth edition, we witness a meaningful milestone that reflects how far we have come together in promoting excellence in green building and sustainability in Hong Kong. Over the past two decades, countless projects and organisations have made impactful efforts in shaping a greener, smarter, and more liveable built environment. Notably, we are particularly delighted to introduce a new recognition for Green Financing, which supports Hong Kong's transition to net zero in a practical way using robust financial tools and forward-thinking strategies. We look forward to more industry peers joining us in promoting the development of sustainable buildings in the future."

Ir Prof. YUEN Pak-leung, Chairman of the Professional Green Building Council, extended his congratulations. "I am delighted to witness the announcement of the winning projects and organisations of the GBA 2025. Established in 2006 and jointly presented with the HKGBC since 2010, our partnership has grown stronger, and together, we have built what many now regard as an 'Oscar-like' platform for the building industry, continuously recognising excellence in the built environment. This year, we received 122 nominations, with 99 finalists shortlisted, a remarkable response from across the industry, demonstrating strong participation, resilience, innovation, and a deep commitment to sustainability. I would also like to take this occasion to express our appreciation to the GBA 2025 Scientific Committee, Organising Committee, every stakeholder, and the Secretariat for steering this edition with clarity and purpose, making tonight an iconic celebration."

In addition, the Award Winners of GBA 2025 will gain an exclusive opportunity to represent Hong Kong in competing for the prestigious World Green Building Council Asia Pacific Leadership in Green Building Awards. This exceptional opportunity not only elevates Hong Kong's leadership in green building development on a regional scale, but also fosters cross-sector and cross-regional collaboration, laying a solid foundation for a sustainable and net-zero future for the next generation.

Hilton Expands Luxury Portfolio with Signing of Signia by Hilton Tainan

Hilton (NYSE: HLT) announced the signing of Signia by Hilton Tainan in partnership with Forte Hotel Group. The newest brand in Hilton's luxury portfolio invites guests to experience the aura of distinction and sophistication with refined moments of personalised service, cosmopolitan amenities, and signature spaces to celebrate special milestones or worldly events.

Set to debut in July 2026 in the heart of Tainan, Taiwan's oldest city and a rich cultural heritage destination, the 344-room hotel will make its mark as the first Signia by Hilton in Asia-Pacific.

Famed for its vibrant food culture, numerous shrines and temples, picturesque natural surroundings, and mild weather, Tainan is both a popular destination for leisure tourism and a centre of business and commerce. Signia by Hilton Tainan will offer easy access to a luxury shopping complex and landmarks, including over 50 museums. The Tainan Airport and Tainan Railway Station are both within a 30-minute drive, while Kaohsiung Airport is approximately an hour away.

"As Signia by Hilton expands globally, the Brand caters to the modern traveller who seeks to reach their peak, personally and professionally, and who continues their pursuits during their travel journeys," said Vincent Ong, vice president, Full Service Brands, Asia Pacific. "Signia by Hilton Tainan will bring to life sophisticated stays marked by the Brand's distinctive '9to5/5to9' mantra across the hotel's destination restaurants, premium wellness offerings, and the premier Club Signia lounge."

The hotel will offer over 1,850 square metres of meeting space, featuring modern technology, anchored by tailored, attentive service for meeting planners and their guests. Signia by Hilton Tainan will also feature an all-day dining restaurant, a speciality restaurant, and a lobby lounge. Guests staying in Club Signia rooms and suites will enjoy personalised service with access to Club Signia, bespoke concierge services, and enhanced in-room amenities.

Guests seeking relaxation and rejuvenation can indulge

in a range of wellness offerings, from a state-of-the-art spa offering rejuvenating, bespoke treatments to a fully equipped fitness centre featuring the latest technology and a pool.

Mr. Benjamin Liao, chairman, Forte Hotel Group, said, "This collaboration with Hilton is a union of brand strength and a symbol of shared vision. By leveraging Forte Hotel Group's deep roots in the Taiwan market and combining it with Hilton's global hospitality expertise, we look forward to connecting the charm of the city with modern business, injecting fresh international energy into Tainan."

Signia by Hilton Tainan joins the brand's growing portfolio in gateway locations around the world, following the recent opening of Signia by Hilton Amman, the first Signia by Hilton hotel outside of the United States, as well as the signing of the first Signia by Hilton in Jaipur, India. Hilton recently announced that its luxury and lifestyle portfolio reached 1,000 trading hotels, with another 500 under development globally, demonstrating continued momentum and opportunity for its brands in this market segment.

Signia by Hilton hotels also participate in Hilton Honors, the award-winning guest loyalty programme for Hilton's 25 distinct hotel brands, offering instant benefits such as a flexible payment slider, an exclusive member discount, and free standard Wi-Fi.

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Hoa Mai Design Award 2025: Vietnam's Rising Design Stars Take Centre Stage with American Red Oak

The American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) reaffirmed its long-standing commitment to Vietnam's design community as it marked its 21st year as a principal supporter of the Hoa Mai Design Award. As one of Vietnam's most respected design competitions, Hoa Mai has become a vital platform for emerging talent, many of whom are introduced to sustainable American hardwoods for the first time through this partnership.

AHEC's collaboration with HAWA continues to guide young designers in understanding responsible material selection, sustainability, and the creative possibilities of American hardwoods. This year's contest once again highlighted how natural materials, particularly American red oak, can inspire innovative form, emotional storytelling, and deeply rooted cultural expression.

AHEC Regional Director John Chan emphasised the organisation's long-term support, stating that designers "push the boundaries of good and sustainable design every year using American hardwood." He highlighted the responsible forest management in the US and the environmental value of exploring a wider range of species.

Several prize-winning designs used American red oak, showcasing the species' versatility and expressive character. First Prize went to LUMAIRE LIGHT, a poetic reinterpretation of the lunar cycle by designers Ngô Thị Quỳnh Trang and Soi. Second Prize was awarded to the NEST STOOL by Nguyễn Thùy Dương, inspired by the familiar Vietnamese bao steamer. Third Prize recognised the CROSSLINE BENCH by Hồ Thị Thu Hà, drawing from the bridges of Saigon. The Grand Award Special Prize went to NODE by architect Lê Hữu Trường, an emotionally rich interpretation of the Vietnamese shoulder pole.

Many Encouragement Prize winners also created thoughtful, beautifully crafted works using American red oak, including the ISU Chair, Gánh Bench, and Echo Cabinet. Their designs reflect Vietnam's growing global presence in contemporary furniture and product design. It is one rooted in tradition, craftsmanship, and a refined understanding of natural materials.

Looking ahead, AHEC plans to deepen its engagement with Vietnam's design and manufacturing sectors, expanding education, technical collaboration, and creative partnerships that empower designers to continue exploring sustainable American hardwood in meaningful, culturally resonant ways.

Ngô Thị Quỳnh Trang & Soi — LUMAIRE LIGHT

First Prize – Open Award, Interior Designers at Kaze

Design duo Ngô Thị Quỳnh Trang and Soi, interior designers at Kaze, won First Prize with LUMAIRE LIGHT, a poetic reinterpretation of the lunar cycle. Using metal reflectors and adjustable LED sources, the piece creates shifting atmospheres of light and shadow, supported by a modular construction that adapts to many settings. Although it was their first time working with American red oak, they found the species added emotional warmth, richness of grain, and a sensory authenticity that deepened the soul of the design.

"Vietnamese design is the harmony between memory and modern life, humble, imperfect, but deeply human."

Nguyễn Thùy Dương — Nest Stool

Second Prize – Open Award, Interior Design Student at Ton Duc Thang University

Interior design student Nguyễn Thùy Dương created the Nest Stool, a playful reinterpretation of the bao steamer with soft curves and a clean, minimalist form. Working with American red oak for the first time, she valued its warm tone, durability, and elegant grain, though turning the hard wood into smooth, uniform curves required precision and control.

"I love creating things that make people feel comfortable and inspired."

Hồ Thị Thu Hà — Crossline Bench

Third Prize – Open Award, Freelance Product Designer

Freelance product designer Hồ Thị Thu Hà drew inspiration from Saigon's modern bridges for the Crossline Bench, capturing their rhythm and structural clarity in a refined timber form. Though its hardness demanded technical care, American red oak offered strength, stability, and a fine grain ideal for clean joinery and smooth surfaces.

"Design is turning ideas into real-life experiences, with people always at the center."

Lê Hữu Trường — NODE

Grand Award – Special Prize, Architect at Li and Partners Architecture Co.

Architect Lê Hữu Trường won the Grand Award Special Prize with NODE, a chair inspired by the Vietnamese shoulder pole and bamboo joinery. The design features complex mortise-and-tenon construction, with contrasting tenons referencing bamboo nodes as a tribute to traditional craftsmanship. Working with American red oak taught him to understand how finishes influence tone and how to control color with greater sensitivity.

"My philosophy is Modern Heritage Design—close to nature, balanced, tranquil, and rooted in culture."

Nguyễn Thị Mỹ Vân — ISU Chair

Encouragement Prize – Open Award, Graduate of Van Lang University

Van Lang University graduate Nguyễn Thị Mỹ Vân created the ISU Chair, a meditation-inspired design that encourages an upright, mindful posture through gentle support and curved structure. They found American red oak strong, stable, and visually calming, though its weight and meticulous finishing requirements demanded careful attention.

"Design connects people with their spaces, shaping how we live, feel, and interact."

Hồ Thị Thu Hà — Echo Cabinet

Encouragement Prize – Open Award, Freelance Product Designer

In the Echo Cabinet, Hồ Hà draws from traditional Vietnamese wooden doors, blending nostalgia with modern practicality through curved door fronts reminiscent of tiled roofs. American red oak provided durability and a warm, expressive grain, though its hardness required careful shaping during fabrication.

"Each item carries its own story, a little soul that accompanies its user."

Trần Tuấn Kiệt — Gánh Bench

Encouragement Prize – Open Award, Interior Design Student at Ton Duc Thang University

Interior design student Trần Tuấn Kiệt designed the Gánh Bench, a modern interpretation of the Vietnamese carrying pole that incorporates traditional joinery learned from his carpenter grandfather. American red oak's strength and expressive grain helped him appreciate careful craftsmanship, even as its hardness challenged his technique.

"Responsible design must consider materials, construction, and sustainability and not just beauty."

Thịnh Nguyễn — THE THỜ

Theme Award, Founder & Architect at NGOAC.SPACE Studio

THE THỜ is Thịnh Nguyễn's contemporary reinterpretation of the Thần Tài – Thổ Địa altar, combining modular design, cultural symbolism, and elegant minimalism. Experimenting with many different materials for his design, American red oak offered a warm, honest aesthetic, though its open grain required extra preparation and finishing.

"My work explores how material becomes a living memory."

HOMETEX SHENZHEN 2026: Connecting Window & Wall Covering Professionals to Sourcing, Trends, and Innovation

HOMETEX SHENZHEN 2026—Asia's premier exhibition focused on window and wall coverings, treatments, and protection—will take place at the Shenzhen Convention & Exhibition Center (Futian) from 7–10 March 2026.

Positioned as a one-stop sourcing platform for window and wall coverings, the exhibition aggregates top-tier supply chain resources from China, covering the full spectrum of industry products and innovative solutions. It serves as a professional hub for global home textiles and home furnishing buyers, facilitating seamless connections, trend insights, and mutually beneficial business collaborations.

One-stop sourcing event for window and wall coverings

Spanning over 100,000 square metres, HOMETEX SHENZHEN 2026 will welcome more than 800 exhibitors from China and overseas. Its product lineup encompasses core categories, including curtains & drapes, blinds & shades, shutters, curtain fabrics, rail systems, and a wide range of window decoration accessories.

Acting as a pivotal bridge between global buyers and verified Chinese manufacturers, the exhibition enables overseas purchasers to connect directly with trusted, verified suppliers. This direct connection allows them to source high-quality products at competitive factory-direct rates, slashing procurement and communication costs.

Top Reasons to Visit

HOMETEX SHENZHEN 2026 has become an unmissable annual event for global window and wall covering professionals. The key reasons include:

- All in one place: Spanning over 100,000 sqm of exhibition space, HOMETEX SHENZHEN brings together over 800 participating companies across 4 days.
- Affordable Excellence: Connect with trusted and verified suppliers and discover a wide range of high-quality window and wall coverings at competitive prices.
- One-stop sourcing: Find all aspects of the industrial chain under one roof, including window coverings, protection, and accessories.
- Innovative Trends: Stay ahead of the curve with the latest trends and product innovations, featuring modern designs, unique styles, and high-quality materials.
- Advanced Technology Integration: Explore cutting-edge technologies, such as UV protection, energy-efficient window coverings, and home automation systems for enhanced convenience and sustainability.
- Sustainable Solutions: Embrace eco-friendly practices with an array of sustainable materials.

Event Highlights: Beyond Sourcing

HOMETEX SHENZHEN serves as a vital sourcing hub for industry professionals, offering a unique platform to explore the latest innovations and trends in window and wall solutions. Attendees will have the opportunity to connect with leading manufacturers, suppliers, and designers, showcasing a diverse range of products, from luxurious drapery and blinds to cutting-edge wall treatments and protective solutions.

Highlights include:

- New and Innovative Product Showcases
- International and Regional Pavilions / Trend Zones
- Competitive Prices, Premium Quality from OEM Suppliers
- Business Matchmaking: Enjoy tailored business matchmaking at HOMETEX SHENZHEN, specifying your sourcing needs, and forming new strategic partnerships with top companies in the field of window and wall decoration from China and around the world.
- Knowledge-packed Industry Conference and Seminars: Learn about the latest industry trends and insights from expert speakers and thought leaders at HOMETEX's design forums and keynote sessions.

Hosted Buyer programme: Effortless Sourcing for Overseas Visitors

To elevate the experience for overseas buyers, HOMETEX SHENZHEN 2026 will feature an enhanced Hosted Buyer programme, exclusively designed for overseas VIP buyers responsible for

home textiles and home furnishing procurement. Centred on targeted B2B matchmaking, the programme leverages exhibition resources to provide exclusive perks, including customised business pairings, priority access to top exhibitors, dedicated negotiation spaces, and more. These value-added services enable overseas buyers to unlock potential business opportunities quickly, driving efficient market expansion and growth.

The application deadline for the Hosted Buyer programme is 15 January 2026; eligible overseas buyers are encouraged to apply early to secure the exclusive benefits.

In March 2026, Shenzhen will once again emerge as the global focal point for the window and wall coverings industry. With its expanded scale, premium resources, and targeted matchmaking services, HOMETEX SHENZHEN 2026 will be a bridge for industry innovation and business collaboration. Global buyers, designers, distributors, and industry professionals are invited to join this landmark event and explore new growth opportunities, collectively shaping a sustainable future for the sector.

Find out more about the event here: https://tinyurl.com/yypjawsf.

JD Beacon: Büro Ole Scheeren Unveils New Hub for Scientific Innovation in Nanjing, China

Büro Ole Scheeren revealed the design for JD.com's new regional headquarters and research & development (R&D) centre in Nanjing, China. Named JD Beacon, the 200-metre tower will establish a leading hub for scientific and artificial intelligence innovation in the Hexi Central Science and Technology Innovation district. Set amongst headquarters for companies such as Alibaba and Xiaomi, JD Beacon will be a prominent new landmark for Nanjing's new digital economy cluster.

The 274,000-square-metre development integrates regional headquarters and advanced R&D functions for JD.com, a technology and service company. It is also China's largest retailer by revenue and one of the world's largest companies, ranking 44th in the 2025 Fortune Global 500. At the core of Jianye High-tech Zone, the project's location offers a base for innovation in cutting-edge fields such as artificial intelligence and robotics.

Ole Scheeren's design for JD Beacon translates JD.com's technological ambition into an architectural form, comprising a central tower and a ring of low-rise buildings that form a coherent ensemble around a central plaza. The tower consists of interlocking volumes and recessed open terraces, creating a continuous three-dimensional link that interacts with the city in all directions. These spaces act as windows, revealing office environments designed for efficient and productive work, symbolic of the district's innovation and the city's progress.

Generous open terraces further extend working and meeting spaces to the exterior and offer views across Nanjing. This configuration provides a productive

Interlocking volumes and recessed open terraces create a continuous three-dimensional link

research environment while asserting a distinct presence within the Hexi district's landscape of innovation.

The ring of low-rise volumes embraces the base of the central tower, connecting and activating the surrounding streets whilst extending JD.com's presence to the wider city. The entrance plaza is designed to be both functional—allowing easy pedestrian and vehicular access—and ceremonial, defined by water features and a landscaped forecourt.

Büro Ole Scheeren was awarded the commission following an international design competition. Construction on the project commenced in November 2025. The landmark design marks a new chapter for both JD.com and Nanjing's regional development, stimulating collaborative research in cutting-edge technologies and creating a future-focused regional headquarters and R&D centre for JD.com.

Photo credit: Büro Ole Scheeren

Photo (right): The ring of low-rise volumes embraces the base of the central tower, connecting and activating the surrounding streets

Generous open terraces further extend working and meeting spaces to the exterior and offer views across Nanjing

Meet Your Next Supplier at R+T Asia 2026: A Networking Powerhouse

27–29 May 2026 • National Exhibition and Convention Center (NECC), Shanghai, China

As Southeast Asia's architecture, construction, shading, and access control sectors continue to evolve toward smarter automation, enhanced sustainability, and higher performance standards, the demand for strong, trusted international supplier partnerships continues to grow. For professionals looking to strengthen sourcing strategies, benchmark innovation, and unlock meaningful new business opportunities, R+T Asia 2026 stands out as the key marketplace where the industry meets.

Returning to the impressive National Exhibition and Convention Center (NECC) in Shanghai from 27–29 May 2026, R+T Asia once again positions itself as Asia's leading exhibition for sun shading systems, roller shutters, doors, gates, and access technologies. The 2026 show is expected to welcome more than 750 exhibitors and tens of thousands of professional visitors from well over 115 countries, creating an international business environment defined by innovation and opportunity.

The Southeast Asian presence at R+T Asia has been particularly strong and continues to grow year after year. In 2025, visitors from Southeast Asia represented 21% of total international attendance, with Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore ranking among the top participating countries. This demonstrates not only the regional relevance of the show but also the increasing importance of R+T Asia as a sourcing and networking hub for businesses across the ASEAN region.

Unlike a conventional trade fair, R+T Asia operates as a strategic, business-first marketplace. Exhibitors showcase cutting-edge automated shading systems, high-performance doors, gates, and access solutions, and innovative materials and components driving sustainability and energy efficiency. At the same time, the show facilitates the conversations, negotiations, and partnerships that shape long-term international supply chains.

At the heart of this business momentum is R+T Asia's standout premium visitor program: the Buyer Club. Designed for qualified key buyers and decision-makers, the Buyer Club transforms a trade fair visit into a curated business journey. Members benefit from tailored business matchmaking, guided support, and structured engagement with leading manufacturers—helping secure the right suppliers faster while building confidence and trust through direct dialogue. Buyer Club participants also enjoy free premium accommodation, access to an exclusive Buyer Club lounge, and participation in high-level networking events, culminating in the prestigious VIP International Party. Due to its exclusive nature, participation is limited and in high demand, making early registration strongly recommended to secure access.

Travel to China has also become more accessible and convenient for many Southeast Asian professionals, with visa-frere access making Shanghai easier than ever to reach. This ensures delegates can focus fully on business development and networking opportunities during the show.

R+T Asia is ultimately about more than seeing new products—it is about building relationships, strengthening supply confidence, and shaping future market direction. Across three dynamic days, the event brings together global manufacturers, influential buyers, regional distributors, developers, and decision-makers in an environment designed to foster growth, collaboration, and long-term strategic partnerships.

Professionals across Southeast Asia interested in joining the Buyer Club and securing curated meetings, premium hospitality, and access to exclusive networking environments are encouraged to apply early to ensure inclusion. **Register here: https://en.rtasia.net/buyer-club.html**

R+T Asia 2026 is where Southeast Asia's next strategic supplier relationship may begin—and where the future direction of the industry continues to take shape.

Johnson Controls and Thamrin Nine Complete Landmark Project to Power the Southern Hemisphere's Tallest Building with Green Technology

Johnson Controls (NYSE: JCI), the global leader in smart, safe, healthy, and sustainable buildings, celebrated the successful completion of a multi-year collaboration with Thamrin Nine, a flagship multi-purpose complex in central Jakarta's central business district that spans commercial, hospitality, and retail spaces.

The project, which helps reduce energy use by up to 30 percent, recently achieved BCA (Building and Construction Authority) Green Mark Platinum certification, recognising its outstanding environmental performance.

As part of the project, Johnson Controls provided chiller plant design and implementation, engineering services, and building automation systems for two of Thamrin Nine's skyscrapers—the Autograph Tower, the tallest building in the Southern Hemisphere at 382.9 metres, and the Luminary Tower. With building systems fully deployed across both towers, Johnson Controls will continue supporting the development through ongoing service and maintenance to ensure long-term efficiency and comfort, and to enhance equipment lifespan.

Smart Building Technologies for a Future-Ready Urban Icon

Johnson Controls designed, supplied, and installed a full suite of integrated building solutions tailored to the complex's high-performance needs. Thamrin Nine marks the company's first chiller plant optimisation project in Indonesia, which aims to make cooling systems work smarter through advanced technologies and improved operations. Through turnkey project management that covered design, implementation, and integration across systems, Johnson Controls delivered significant energy and cost savings.

These included:

- A 3,100-ton YORK® cooling system for Autograph Tower, designed to meet the Green Mark Platinum certification target of below 0.58 kW/TR. The system helps reduce energy use by up to 30 percent, supporting lower operating costs while maintaining comfort across the building.
- Three 300 TR high-efficiency YORK chillers integrated with an Energy Management System (EMS), optimising cooling performance and reducing energy demand in the Luminary Tower, which houses three hospitality properties.
- Tailored Air Handling Units (AHUs) and Fan Coil Units (FCUs) for diverse commercial, retail, residential, and hospitality zones.
- Advanced analytics and real-time monitoring based on the Metasys Building Management System, enabling facility teams to detect and resolve issues before downtime occurs, and improving reliability and reducing maintenance costs.

"This project is a defining milestone for urban development in Jakarta," said Michael Wiener, Design Director, Thamrin Nine. "Our goal was to change the way people live, work, and play in Jakarta —delivering an integrated destination that combines scale, choice, convenience, and sustainability. Johnson Controls has been the ideal partner to help us achieve that vision, and we appreciate their continued support in maintaining performance at the highest standards."

"Our partnership with Thamrin Nine exemplifies how future-forward engineering and digital optimisation can deliver not just iconic buildings, but greener, smarter cities," said Wibawa Jati Kusuma, General Manager, Malaysia & Indonesia,

Johnson Controls. "By integrating advanced building technologies, we're creating healthier, more sustainable indoor environments that reduce operational costs, lower carbon emissions, and enhance occupant well-being. With ongoing service and support, we're committed to helping Thamrin Nine maintain optimised performance and set the pace for sustainable urban development in Indonesia."

A Model for Sustainable Development in ASEAN

The Thamrin Nine partnership builds on Johnson Controls' 140-year legacy of innovation and leadership in smart, safe, healthy, and sustainable technologies. It is part of its expanding portfolio of sustainability-driven projects across Southeast Asia, including:

- Mactan-Cebu International Airport Authority (Philippines): Championed operational excellence with Johnson Controls' Metasys Building Management System.
- Graha CIMB Niaga Building (Indonesia): Transformed HVAC performance and energy efficiency through digital modernisation, improving sustainability and tenant satisfaction.
- Ng Teng Fong General Hospital (Singapore): OpenBlue digital platform delivered millions in energy cost savings while enhancing patient care.
- City-Centre Development (Singapore): Set to cut around 88,000 tonnes of CO_2 over 15 years through Energy Performance Contracting (EPC) solution and Cooling-as-a-Service (CaaS) model.

These proven technologies and approaches, adapted for the Jakarta context, support Indonesia's Net Zero Emissions by 2060 vision, demonstrating how global expertise can address local environmental challenges at scale. As it celebrates its 140th anniversary in 2025, Johnson Controls continues to redefine building performance, driving the next era for commercial buildings, transforming industries, and powering its customers' missions.

Johnson Controls Metasys 15.0 open Building Automation System sets new industry standard with market-leading scalability, resiliency, and energy intelligence

Johnson Controls (NYSE: JCI), the global leader in smart, safe, healthy, and sustainable buildings, announced the launch of Metasys 15.0, its flagship open building automation system.

Engineered to meet the demands of mission-critical environments, Metasys 15.0 delivers unmatched scalability, built-in resiliency, and instant energy intelligence. This gives facility managers the tools to optimise building performance, ensure compliance, and accelerate decarbonisation.

New features include support for up to 1,000 IP devices per server, 60 percent more than most Building Automation Systems available today, along with multi-server redundancy offering simultaneous backup and a preconfigured, ready-to-use Energy Management suite that delivers real-time insights and actionable data.

"Building operators today must navigate a complex landscape of energy goals, operational demands, and evolving workforce needs," said Kaishi Zhang, vice president of Product Management for Building Automation Systems at Johnson Controls. "The latest release of Metasys delivers a secure, intuitive BMS platform that ensures reliability, simplifies energy oversight, and reduces reliance on specialised labor—essential for deploying across critical applications where performance and uptime matter

more than ever before. We're thrilled to launch this highly anticipated release, a technology that symbolises the roots of Johnson Controls and where our experts continue to redefine building automation."

Metasys 15.0 simplifies deployment and can be scaled across multiple buildings and sites, bringing competitive advantages to mission-critical industries such as healthcare systems, data centres, and large campuses, while bolstering uptime and efficiency.

Key features include:

- Market-leading scalability: With support for 50,000 objects and 1,000 IP devices per server, Metasys 15.0 can be seamlessly deployed across large healthcare campuses, universities, or multi-site enterprises without costly hardware upgrades. By allowing IP devices to communicate directly with the server, organisations can reduce infrastructure costs by up to 60% by eliminating the need for intermediary components.
- 24/7 data resiliency: New multi-server redundancy ensures critical alerts, trends, and audit logs are backed up on two Metasys servers simultaneously, helping to ensure operational continuity, data availability, and compliance in mission-critical environments like hospitals and data centres.
- Fast industry configuration: Facility managers can now more easily configure and manage the system directly using a web client, reducing equipment setup time by nearly 95% compared to previous versions and eliminating the need for server shutdowns or external support.
- Interoperability: as an open BAS solution, Metasys 15.0, along with previous iterations, is widely recognised by field technicians for its leading ability to support a wide range of third-party IT and OT protocols such as BACnet, Modbus, MQTT, API, and more.

Metasys is a cornerstone of Johnson Controls' product ecosystem, delivering seamless integration across a broad spectrum of building technologies to unlock energy efficiency, system-wide optimisation, and thermal performance. The combined impact of Metasys, together with Johnson Controls' advanced HVAC, fire, and security technologies, as well as the OpenBlue smart building ecosystem and network of more than 40,000 field and service technicians, can deliver lower operating costs and a stronger return on investment.

Nippon Paint Reveals 4 Global Mindsets Shaping Colour Trends in 2026–27

As the world continues to evolve, it is inspiring new ways for us to live, connect, and express ourselves. Emerging from these shifts are four key macro-trends:

- A growing focus on wellness and living well for longer
- A renewed commitment to be mindful in a fast-moving world
- A spirit of curiosity as we embrace endless new possibilities
- A search for balance between the offline and online world

In response to these shifting global mindsets and concerns, Nippon Paint has curated its 2026–27 Trend Beyond Colours, a moodboard of Colour Stories that capture the macro trends of our time and translate them into purposeful, innovative design ideas, in collaboration with Colour Hive.

With the theme "Resonate", the Trend Beyond Colours 2026–27 edition invites professionals to discover which macro-trends resonate with their clients' needs and encourages them to interpret and weave these insights into their projects.

Turning Global Insights into Design Innovation

These macro-trends are driven by insights into human behaviour and cultural signals, reflecting the evolving dynamics of society. Anchored in data, the colours associated with these macro-trends offer a more objective and meaningful narrative, enhancing the storytelling behind design decisions.

As they remain open-ended and non-prescriptive, these macro-trends provide a solid foundation for designers to

Colours of the Year

Forever Well Colour Palette

True Self Colour Palette

explore how these shifts will shape the spaces of tomorrow.

Forever Well: A growing focus on wellness and living well for longer

As people embrace increased longevity and navigate the realities of an ageing population, wellness becomes both a lifestyle and a necessity. This shift is driving a growing focus on sustainability, clean beauty, and natural ingredients, with ancient wellness practices reimagined for a new generation seeking holistic well-being. Wellness, as a whole, is taking on a deeper meaning globally, expanding from the pursuit of living well to the aspiration of living well for longer.

In response to these shifts, there's a distinct demand for materials and colours that mirror this evolving landscape—inspiring a palette of clean and soft pastels that echo themes of sustainability, balance, and longevity. Reeded, fluted glass paired with Rose Thoughts and Lychee Float creates balanced tranquillity, while pale green marble married with Restful Spot and By The Pound invites thoughtful reflection amidst nature.

True Self: A renewed commitment to be mindful in a fast-moving world

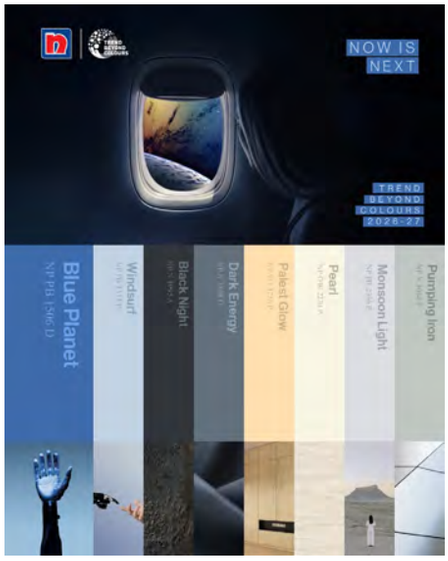
The world is in a constant state of motion, seeming only to move and work ever faster. In light of this, individuals are embracing mindful choices and taking ownership of their lives, finding a deeper sense of identity amidst the chaos. People are increasingly rejecting the transient and material, instead seeking a more meaningful sense of security and identity in things that offer grounding.

This shift inspires a palette of rich, organic tones, reflecting authenticity, tradition, and a grounded, tactile connection to what truly matters. Wicker basketry provides a tactile and mindful element when paired with Postman Blue, while walnut finishes centre more airy, light colours like Muted Emerald and Basket Straw.

Now is Next: A spirit of curiosity as we embrace endless new possibilities

From entrepreneurial energy to the AI boom, people are chasing bold new frontiers and charting endless new possibilities. These currents converge into a sleek, bold, and polished aesthetic that is dynamic yet full of wonder, looking past the present to what comes next, with precision and purpose.

This drive is expressed through sleek metallics and bold tones, symbolising ambition, progress, and futuristic possibility. Here, Palest Glow creates a juxtaposition of light



Now is Next Colour Palette

and shadow when paired with lava ceramic glaze, capturing the glow on the horizon that many seek to reach. Blue Planet and Monsoon Light, when married with futuristic perforated metal panelling, embody an otherworldly coolness that pulls our gaze to the stars.

Between Worlds: A search for balance between the offline and online world

As the line between the offline and online world blurs, people are increasingly navigating a landscape where digital connection and real-life presence coexist, yet often leave them feeling alone together. In response, behaviour is tilting intentionally social: time once spent scrolling is moving into shared moments and experience-first gatherings, prioritising shared participation and proving that the most memorable connections are increasingly made in person.

This duality sparks a palette of vibrant, youthful colours, embodying escapism and immersive experiences that bridge the gap between the digital and physical worlds with optimism and dynamic definition. Diving Pool and Glitzy Blue balance the ever-shifting hues of iridescent coating, while brushed stainless steel adds an immersive ambiguity to Fascination and Party Time, effectively blurring the lines between digital and physical.

Creating Spaces that Resonate

"Colour will always play a powerful role in shaping and capturing the way we feel, think, and live in the built environment. With Trend Beyond Colours, we want to move beyond simply dictating which colours we think architects and designers should use," commented Jo-Lynn Yap, Senior Manager, Group Colour Leadership at NIPSEA Group. "We believe that our Colour Stories have truly brought to light valuable insights that professionals can translate into useful foresights; something that will inspire and inform their creative process. As such, we are excited to partner with industry professionals to bring their creative visions to life and to shape spaces that truly resonate."

The intersection of human behaviour, cultural signals, and data-driven colour choices provides a unique opportunity to create spaces that resonate deeply with the people who inhabit them. For architects and designers looking to push the boundaries of their work, these insights are just the beginning.

Between Worlds Colour Palette

SIDA 2025 Celebrates A Breakthrough Year for Interior Design in Singapore

On 24 November 2025, the Singapore Interior Design Awards (SIDA) Gala Dinner 2025 marked the conclusion of what the judging panel is calling the most rigorous and high-calibre awards cycle in the programme's history.

Presented by the Society of Interior Designers Singapore (SIDS), the 9th edition of SIDA recognised 108 exceptional global winners from six nations, honouring projects that are defining the next era of spatial and interior design.

The prestigious ceremony, held at the Sands Expo and Convention Centre, was graced by Guest-of-Honour Ms Indranee Rajah, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Finance and National Development, with over 400 guests from design, architecture, and the built environment sectors.

In her address, Minister Rajah highlighted the essential and transformative power of these industries, moving beyond aesthetics to impact the daily experience of every Singaporean.

"The role of our professional interior designers today is more than just shaping spaces—you are shaping lives for the better through design," said Minister Rajah. "Whether it is designing productive workplaces, creating vibrant community spaces, or building homes that form the backdrop of our family life, your creativity and work touch the daily experiences of every Singaporean."

Minister Indranee Rajah, Mr Tung Ching Yew, and Mr Nithipong Subaneknan with the Special Award Winners

While submission numbers hovered around a consistent level (over 650 submissions from 13 countries, including a notable new entry from South Africa), the quality of completed projects submitted soared.

SIDS President Mr Tung Ching Yew's speech. Photo credit: SIDS

Best Design Firm of the Year: DP Design, Mike Lim

Design Educator of the Year: Cagil Yurdakul Toker, Raffles Design Institute

Design of the Year: Singapore Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka, Crystal Chu, KR+D Pte Ltd

Designer of the Year Award: Allan Wang, DP Design

Lifetime Achievement Award: Andrew Fisher, Andy Fisher workshop Pte Ltd

SIDA is cementing its status as a choice platform where design conceptualisation and execution are judged at the highest level. Submissions from Singapore accounted for a significant share of the total, with 557 entries.

The submissions were meticulously assessed by a diverse and extensive Jury Panel for the Completed category, comprising internationally renowned experts and industry leaders whose presence validates the award's prestige. Notable names include: Angela Spathonis, Managing Director at Gensler; Ar. Razvan I. Ghilic-Micu, Senior Associate at Hassell; Ar. Wong Ker How, Founding Partner at ASOLIDPLAN; Ben Stevenson, Partner (Interior Design) in Foster + Partners; and Sabine Beck, Partner at Hirsch Bedner Associates.

"The SIDA 2025 jury was looking for projects that challenged norms, introduced groundbreaking material

Lifetime Achievement Award: Constance Ann, Constann Design Pte Ltd

Young Designer of the Year Award: Allan Wang, DP Design

innovation, and truly placed the human experience at the forefront," Mr Nithipong Subaneknan (Earth), Chairman of SIDA 2025, commented. "The selected winners represent the most inventive and sophisticated work being produced today."

The awards reinforced Singapore's role as a regional and global design leader, with six highly coveted Special Awards reserved exclusively for local practitioners.

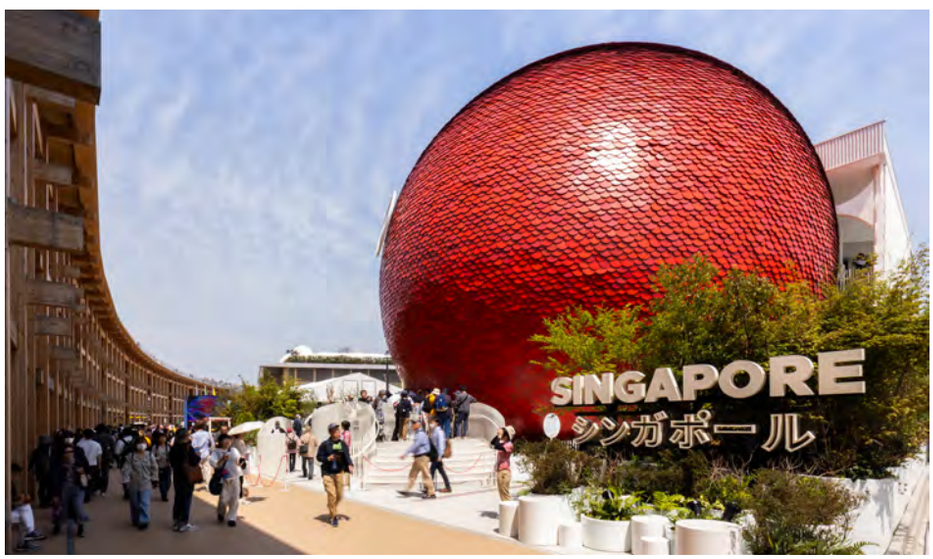
Mr Subaneknan affirmed, "SIDA 2025 has been refined to place a stronger emphasis on our Singaporean designers and their groundbreaking works, further cementing our nation's role as a leader in design innovation."

SIDA 2025 Highlights

- Lifetime Achievement Award: Andrew Fisher, Andy Fisher Workshop Pte Ltd
- Lifetime Achievement Award: Constance Ann, Constann Design Pte Ltd
- Design of the Year: Singapore Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka, Crystal Chu, KR+D Pte Ltd
- Designer of the Year: Allan Wang, DP Design
- Young Designer of the Year: Allan Wang, DP Design
- Best Design Firm of the Year: DP Design
- Design Educator of the Year: Cagil Yurdakul Toker, Raffles Design Institute

As the world of interior design continues to grow and evolve, SIDA offers a valuable platform for showcasing creativity, skill, and innovation. The competition not only brings attention to talented professional designers but also shines a spotlight on young design students aspiring to join the profession through the SIDA Youth Category. This year, 33 students from Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) across the country received a SIDA Youth Award.

In alignment with its commitment to nurturing emerging talent, SIDA has awarded the SIDA Youth Excellence Award for the second consecutive year. This annual bursary programme recognises three students enrolled in local IHLs, with each winner receiving SGD3,000.



Design of the Year: Singapore Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka, Crystal Chu, KR+D Pte Ltd. Photo credit: KR+D

SIDA 2025 Trophies. Photo credit: SIDS

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AHEC and Phantom Hands Unveil 'Re-editions' Collaboration at Design Mumbai, Featuring Talent from Australia, Japan, and the Netherlands

Re-editions, a collaboration between the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) and Bangalore-based furniture manufacturer Phantom Hands (PH), was unveiled at the second edition of Design Mumbai, which took place from November 26 to 29, 2025.

The collection featured eight pieces of furniture (tables and seating), each made from American red oak or cherry, designed by Dutch duo x+l, Japanese-Danish duo INODA+SVEJE, Australian architect and furniture maker Adam Markowitz, and the iconic Sri Lankan Architect Geoffrey Bawa.

This latest collaboration builds on REFRACTIONS—a cross-cultural, international design collaboration—which introduced Phantom Hands to American hardwoods and to Adam Markowitz, an Australian architect and woodworker. This resulted in a small collection of furniture and lighting created with Markowitz that explored the technique of layered wood bending, well-suited to American red oak, cherry, and maple.

According to Phantom Hands, the precision and prolonged focus required for this method turned out to be a deep dive into grasping some of the native characteristics of these new species.

"It was based on this experience that we decided to introduce American cherry and red oak into our current catalogue, for x+l, INODA+SVEJE, and especially the coloured pieces in the Bawa Collection," said Deepak Srinath, Co-founder, Phantom Hands. "The move was well-weighed, given that the Bawa Collection consists of re-editions of furniture designed by the late Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa for his spaces. A number of these were originally made with tropical hardwoods that are now difficult to source ethically or banned for export. Given the environmental credentials of American hardwoods, it made sense for us to incorporate them into our existing collections."

At Design Mumbai, the eight pieces were placed within a microenvironment, organised as a strict grid structure with independent floor, ceiling, and wall modules. The geometrical arrangement of fabric layers coupled with the dismantlable structure points to the origins of Phantom Hands rooted in Chandigarh's modernism, particularly Corbusier's brise soleil screens and Jeanneret's furniture designs, which can be seen in the periodicals bookcase and the demountable chair.

Bangalore-based architect David Joe Thomas was commissioned to design the pavilion, which has been made using American hard maple and crafted by Phantom Hands. The pavilion was designed to accommodate the eight selected pieces made in American red oak or cherry. Since it had to be assembled at the fair site and dismantled once the event was over, the structure had to be light, transportable, and easy to unpack and construct. It also had to use American maple, the last of the three hardwood species from a donation by The Rossi Group that

Phantom Hands had yet to explore. Lastly, the pavilion had to reflect Phantom Hands' design aesthetic and history. This would involve connecting a geographically alien wood to the mid-century modernist moment in India—the point of Phantom Hands' inception.

"Our decision to work with Phantom Hands was all about encouraging an accomplished and well-respected Indian furniture manufacturer to experiment with U.S. hardwoods. We knew that this would be a challenge, given that their work was all in teak and that temperate American hardwoods not only look different, but behave very differently as well," said Roderick Wiles, AHEC Regional Director. "After many months of experimentation, knowledge transfer, and a successful collaboration, Phantom Hands were more than willing to adopt American hardwoods into their body of work and across their collections. Bringing this to Design Mumbai was an obvious thing to do, as it would give us an opportunity to show India's design community what is possible."

The eight pieces that make up the Re-editions collaboration include: the Saddle Chair, Bentota Dining Chair and Bentota Lounge Chair, all in American red oak and designed by Geoffrey Bawa Practice; the x+l 14 Full Circle Coffee Table in American red oak and x+l 02 Room Divider by x+l in American cherry; the Tangāli Modular Armchair by INODA+SVEJE in American cherry; and a Dining Table and Bench by Adam Markowitz in American red oak.

According to Wiles, Phantom Hands can be characterised by a dedication to thoughtful craftsmanship and traditional manufacturing techniques. These furniture pieces embody

timelessness in a world where throwaway culture is becoming the norm.

"Timber remains at the heart of our work, but this new chapter pushes the exploration beyond furniture. At its core, our collaboration with AHEC is an ongoing experiment, an attempt to understand what unfamiliar woods can do on their own terms and now to integrate them into the milieu of Indian furniture in an authentic way. It's a learning curve, and the Design Mumbai pavilion became both its testing ground and its showcase—an ambitious, unexpected project that revealed how our relationship with wood and designing with it is evolving," concluded Aparna Rao, Co-founder, Phantom Hands.

Photo credit: Design Mumbai

Forested Future: AHEC's New Documentary Looks Deep into the Woods to Find Hope for Humanity

Directed by filmmaker Petr Krejčí and produced by the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) Europe, the new documentary Forested Future is a feature-length immersion into the Appalachian forest communities of the eastern US. Inspired by A Trillion Trees, a book by the English environmental journalist Fred Pearce, the film is a visually rich and wide-ranging exploration of how, in an age of climate crisis, our relationship with trees and forests might hold the key to a positive future.

"I have always believed that the heart of filmmaking lies in telling stories that matter, stories that can ignite change, inspire action, and awaken a collective

Mira Nakashima

sense of responsibility. I am convinced that Forested Future tells such a story," said Petr Krejčí.

As the world has become increasingly urbanized, humanity's sense of connection to nature has weakened. Detached from the land, humans are disconnected from the materials we depend on to build and furnish our homes and towns. Forested Future is an attempt to reestablish that connection.

Following the lives and work of the people whose lives are woven into the story of America's hardwood forests—foresters, farmers, artisans, ecologists, timber workers, and more—Forested Future gently but compellingly makes the case for a traditional model of land stewardship that is in tune with the cycles of nature and the rhythm of the forest.

By learning to see beyond the short term, thinking in 'tree time' rather than human lifespans, the film argues that society can embrace regenerative practice, meet material needs, heal this broken bond with nature, and find solutions to some of the most urgent problems of today.

"As humans, we love wood and instinctively engage with it, having used it to build and decorate our environments [for] thousands of years. Although today's societal pressures leave many people feeling that we shouldn't cut down trees, not all forests are disappearing, and this film dispels that myth. It tells an extraordinary story of reforestation and community engagement. We believe architects and designers will be able to make more informed decisions if they have a better understanding of this amazing resource. This film is a beautiful way to engage them," commented David Venables, European director, AHEC.

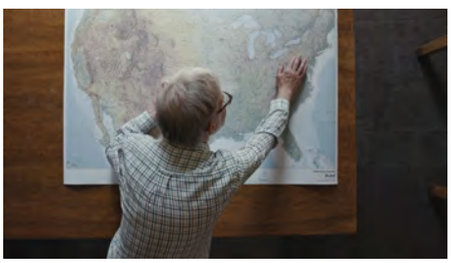
Having screened around Europe at the Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival in the Czech Republic and the Barcelona's BARQ International Architecture Film Festival, Forested Future premiered in the UK at the Institute of Contemporary Arts on 3 November 2025. Besides English, the film is also available in Czech, French, Italian, German, and Spanish editions.

Photo credit: Petr Krejci

Alex Zimmerman, Denny Payne, and Fred Pearce

Behind the scenes

Gary W. Parks



Fred Pearce

Taber Museum

Menominee

Hilton Expands Flagship Brand in Bangkok with Opening of Hilton Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Golf Resort & Spa

On 14 January 2026, Hilton (NYSE: HLT) announced the opening of Hilton Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Golf Resort & Spa, strengthening the presence of its flagship brand in Thailand's capital.

The opening marks the hospitality company's fourth Hilton Hotel & Resorts property in Bangkok, joining Millennium Hilton Bangkok, Hilton Bangkok Grande Asoke, and Hilton Sukhumvit Bangkok.

Hilton Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Golf Resort & Spa

As Hilton's flagship brand and the most recognised name in the industry, Hilton Hotels & Resorts continues to welcome guests with effortless authenticity, pioneering several industry firsts. Set within a unique urban resort environment just 15 minutes from Suvarnabhumi Airport, the 223-key property offers a compelling new option for international transit travellers, business guests, and leisure visitors seeking space, connectivity and recreation at the gateway to Bangkok.

Formerly operating under another brand, Hilton Suvarnabhumi Golf Resort & Spa brings the brand's globally recognised service, design sensibility, and hospitality ethos to one of the city's fastest-growing districts.

"Bangkok remains one of the most dynamic hospitality markets in Asia Pacific, driven by resilient demand across leisure and corporate travel," said Alexandra Murray, area vice president and regional head of South East Asia, Hilton. "As a key gateway city for the region, Bangkok plays a critical role in our growth strategy. The opening of Hilton Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Golf Resort & Spa reflects how we are responding to evolving traveller expectations, with greater flexibility, seamless airport access, and high-quality resort amenities, while reinforcing Hilton's leadership in one of the region's most competitive hotel markets."

Grand ballroom

Located near major transport corridors, Hilton Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Golf Resort & Spa provides access to Bangkok's eastern districts and the Eastern Economic Corridor, a key engine of Thailand's economic growth. The hotel is also close to lifestyle and retail destinations, including Mega Bangna, Siam Premium Outlets, and Central Village Outlet, while offering direct access to Summit Windmill Golf Club and Windmill Football Club.

Vincent Ong, vice president, Full Service Brands, Asia Pacific, Hilton, commented, "As Hilton continues to build momentum across South East Asia, expanding our flagship brand in Bangkok reflects both the strength of this market and the brand's enduring appeal to global travellers. As an iconic brand that has refined the art of hosting, Hilton Hotels & Resorts brings that promise to life through this unique property by placing guests at the centre of every experience. Spaces are designed to encourage authentic interactions and bring together that balance of globally familiar comforts and unexpected local delights of the destination."

Hilton Hotels & Resorts is designed to spark authentic connections, creating an atmosphere that invites guests to connect, celebrate, and create memorable moments. Guests can enjoy a diverse range of dining experiences, offering the best of global and local cuisine across the resort's restaurants and lounges, each designed to offer a distinct sense of place and purpose.

At Tetto, the hotel's Italian restaurant, the menu draws on time-honoured Italian recipes interpreted through a


Kitchen Craft


Spa

modern lens, with an emphasis on quality ingredients and thoughtful simplicity. Inspired by the Italian word for "roof," Tetto is conceived as a place for shared meals and relaxed gatherings, where familiar flavours are presented with care in a warm, contemporary setting that encourages unhurried dining.

Kitchen Craft, the resort's all-day dining venue, offers a more interactive approach. Designed as a walk-through of open kitchens, the space invites guests to observe chefs at work and engage directly in the cooking process. Guided by the culinary team, diners can personalise their dishes to suit individual preferences, turning each meal into a tailored experience defined by freshness, technique, and choice. Together with the Lobby Lounge, which provides a comfortable setting for informal meetings or quiet moments throughout the day, the resort's dining venues reflect Hilton's focus on approachable, well-executed food experiences that balance craftsmanship with ease.

With thoughtfully designed venues and expert event planning, Hilton Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Golf Resort & Spa is the ideal setting for iconic events, whether grand galas, milestone celebrations, or inspiring business gatherings, ensuring every occasion is memorable and masterfully hosted. The hotel features more than 1,200 square metres of flexible meeting and event space, including two ballrooms measuring 330 and 260 square metres, positioning it as a versatile venue for conferences, corporate retreats, and social events. Leisure facilities include a spa, outdoor swimming pool, a fitness centre, and a dedicated Kids' Club designed for family travellers.

"Our partnership with Hilton reflects a shared ambition for Hilton Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Golf Resort & Spa and its role within Bangkok's evolving hospitality landscape," said Nuttapol Jurangkool, president, Summit Windmill Group. "Hilton's global scale and brand strength, together with our deep understanding of the local market, allow us to create a resort experience that resonates with Bangkok residents as much as it does with international guests."

Hilton Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Golf Resort & Spa will undergo minor refurbishments through late 2026. During this period, the hotel will remain fully operational, with guest experience and service continuity maintained throughout.

Guests staying at the hotel can enjoy the benefits of Hilton Honors, Hilton's award-winning guest loyalty programme. Members who book directly through preferred Hilton channels can earn points and enjoy immediate benefits, including flexible payment options using Points and money, exclusive member discounts, and complimentary standard WiFi.


Infinity Lawn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Simeon Dux: Doing Quality Timber Justice Through Considered Craft

After winning the title of 'The Object 2025' in this year's INDE. awards, the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) sat down with Melbourne-based furniture maker and designer Simeon Dux to learn more about his process, design philosophy, and what it takes to make an "heirloom quality" piece of furniture.

Simeon's career reflects a progression through every stage of the craft process, grounding his work as a designer in years of hands-on making. He began working as a carpenter for a decade, inspiring his love of timber and its physical possibilities, leading him to re-study at the Melbourne Guild of Fine Woodworking to learn furniture making under Alastair Boell.

Crediting his time as a carpenter, Simeon explains that it taught him to "work fast" while still keeping his pieces "refined and delicate." However, the transition from furniture maker to designer-maker was slightly slower. Like many great creatives, he learnt to design by osmosis, surrounding himself with beautifully rendered pieces by great craftspeople at the Guild.

"I was continually exposed to exceptional quality design, and over time, it seeped in. I learnt what small details really make a piece stand out versus what characterises a poor imitation."

After winning the title of 'The Object 2025' in this year's INDE. awards, AHEC sat down with Melbourne-based furniture maker and designer Simeon Dux to learn more about his process, design philosophy, and what it takes to make an "heirloom quality" piece of furniture.

Now Simeon runs his own workshop in Melbourne, crafting and designing his own timber pieces inspired by historical furniture heavyweights Niels Vodder and Émile-Jacques Ruhlmann, as well as producing stunning commissions for Australia's top architects. Look no further than long-time collaborator Adam Markowitz to see the pair's ability to fuse ingenious design, carefully considered finishes, and sustainable hardwoods—the formula of furniture crafted to last generations.

This is Simeon's design philosophy, where all aspects of process converge on the concept of longevity. In material selection, he ensures the timber is the absolute right fit for the piece, examining its "species-based subtleties and nuances," taking into account its grain structure, density, and whether it is close or open-pored. This is then enhanced by a design ethos of creating something that has visual appeal across decades, choosing one to two fine focal points to shine through, evident in pieces like his expansive

Credit: Northside Studio

A-TWO Sideboard 1; American white oak and black walnut. Credit: Simeon Dux

Art Deco Wall Unit 3; American walnut, white oak, tulipwood, and brass. Credit: Northside Studio

Bens Breakfront Bookcase 1; American white oak, tulipwood, brass. Credit: Simeon Dux

American walnut and white oak. Credit: Simeon Dux

Josh's Watch Box 1; American walnut burl, birds-eye maple, boxwood inlay, peacock baize, and American cherry, ebony, walnut. Credit: Simeon Dux

'Art Deco Wall Unit' in American white oak and walnut featuring tambour doors with parquetry inlay and hand-shaped waterfall curves.

"It doesn't matter if the design's really good if it's going to fall apart in five years," Simon explains. He tries to achieve as much refinement as possible in his hand-drawn sketches before he starts breaking down timber components, ensuring his pieces are solid from conception. Unlike carpentry, elements can't be added along the way. The result: "a piece of furniture that can last as long as it takes for another tree to grow, where I know I've done the timber justice."

Simeon's synthesis of longevity and quality is something that brings him back to working with American hardwoods again and again. He favours American walnut, partly owing to its nostalgic appeal—being one of the first timbers he ever worked with—and for its beautiful colour and natural chatoyance. These features are abundant in his stunningly crafted matching walnut 'Sham Bedsides' with double bridle leg joinery, hand-carved cove profiles with dovetailed piston fit drawers, and ship-lap back panels. Alongside walnut, he is drawn to American maple and cherry, given their fine quality, ease of availability, and his valuing of sustainable material choices across his work.

Looking to the future, Simeon's ambitions are a reflection of what's brought him success so far—he is looking to continue creatively advancing his designs and keep working alongside skilful craftspeople in his six-person workshop. Perhaps even a solo exhibition for his pieces, where excellent timber has been done justice. In the meantime, he is teaming up yet again with Adam Markowitz for an exciting project for a tourist centre on the infamous Great Ocean Road.

Simeon is crafting "four curved sculpted benches" which will act as the centre's focal point. He admits it's going to be a physically demanding job, accounting for the pieces' weight and complexity, but he has no doubt the result will be something remarkable. This project will be one to look forward to as another iteration of Simeon's ability to blend aesthetics with durability, showing what is possible with quality timber.

Second Sideboard 2; American oak, rattan. Credit: Simeon Dux

Sham Bedsides; American walnut, tulipwood, and brass. Credit: Simeon Dux

T5 In the Making Exhibition: Taking Visitors on a Journey into Singapore's Aviation Future

Acting Minister for Transport and Senior Minister of State for Finance, Mr Jeffrey Siow, launched T5 In the Making on 5 January 2026, an immersive exhibition where visitors are invited to discover the vision, design, and innovations behind Changi Airport's upcoming Terminal 5 (T5).

Jointly organised by the Ministry of Transport (MOT), the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS), and Changi Airport Group (CAG), T5 In the Making will be held from 6 January to March 2026 at Terminal 3's Arrival Hall and is free for all visitors. Since registration opened to the public on 15 December 2025, 15,000 visitors have registered for tickets to the exhibition.

The exhibition's launch event was attended by Ms Sun Xueling, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Transport, and Ministry of National Development, as well as various members of the airport community.

T5 In the Making offers a unique perspective on how aviation has shaped Singapore's story and continues to drive its growth into the future with T5.

Visitors will experience Changi Airport's bold journey and future vision through five zones: from the airport's strategic shift from Paya Lebar to Changi, to an experiential look at T5's design, scale, and innovations. Visitors will witness the technologies being explored to address manpower, ageing population, and climate change challenges, and conclude their visit by imagining the future with interactive Artificial Intelligence (AI) experiences and viewing detailed scale models of T5 and the larger Changi East development.

From left to right: CAAS Director-General Mr. Han Kok Juan, CAAS Chairman Mr. Edmund Cheng, Senior Minister of State for Transport Ms. Sun Xueling, Acting Minister for Transport Mr. Jeffrey Siow, CAG Chairman Mr. Lim Ming Yan, Permanent Secretary for Transport Mr. Lau Peet Meng, and CAG CEO Mr. Yam Kum Weng at the launch of T5 In the Making exhibition.

Upon check-in, visitors will receive a personalised 'boarding pass' that doubles as a stamp rally card, allowing them to collect stamps as they explore each exhibition zone.

Five experiences, one Changi story

At the check-in area of the exhibition, visitors will be issued a personalised 'boarding pass' with their registered name. As they travel through each zone, the pass acts as a stamp rally card, with five adorable Buddy Bear embossed stamps to be collected as keepsakes.

The first zone, Another Bold Singapore Chapter, illustrates the need for T5 and what it means for Singapore. It documents the decision Singapore made to shift its main civilian airport from Paya Lebar to Changi, setting the stage for strategic expansion to become the global air hub it is today. Through animations on a 2.7-metre-tall globe, see

Zone 1, Another Bold Singapore Chapter, illustrates how Changi Airport's T5 is poised to support the growth in Asia's air travel and keep Singapore connected and competitive.

Zone 2, Built on Firm Foundations, shows how the bold decisions of past generations have shaped the present and continue to mould the future.

how Changi Airport is poised to capture opportunities from rising air travel demand in Asia with the development of T5.

The second zone, Built on Firm Foundations, shows how the bold decisions of past generations have shaped the present and continue to mould the future. Follow the evolution of Changi's coastline through decades of land reclamation efforts that have paved the way for key airport developments. Trace the story of Terminals 1 to 4 and Jewel Changi Airport while recounting the multiple world-firsts that have defined Changi's reputation for excellence.

A visual showcase awaits visitors at the third zone, From Vision to Reality. Witness the scale of T5 through an immersive experience and learn about the design considerations for this mega-yet-cosy terminal.

Next, take a glimpse into the future at the Cool Tech Warm Touch zone. From robotics to smart systems, view examples of the innovations and technologies being explored for T5 to address the challenges of manpower constraints, an ageing population, and climate change.

The fifth and final zone, Come Imagine with T5, encourages visitors to imagine what the future terminal could be. A dynamic, AI-powered, interactive mural weaves each visitor's interests into a unique visual for a special photo moment. A scale model of T5 and Changi East offers visitors a detailed view of the development.

In the From Vision to Reality zone, visitors will discover an immersive experience that brings T5's vision and scale to life.

In Zone 4, Cool Tech Warm Touch, visitors will witness firsthand the technologies being explored for T5 to address future challenges while maintaining world-class service.

Exhibition details

Venue: Changi Airport Terminal 3, Level 1 Arrival Hall (near McDonald's)
Exhibition period: 6 January to March 2026
Opening hours: 10.00am to 8.00pm daily (last entry at 7.15pm)
Admission: Free
Duration: 60 minutes (recommended)

Those interested in experiencing T5 In the Making are invited to register for a visit slot at https://www.changiairport.com/t5-in-the-making. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis, and each booking can accommodate up to five persons. Visitors may reserve a visit slot up to 30 days in advance. Walk-in visits will be accepted, subject to available capacity.

Photo credit: Changi Airport Group

Be inspired by the possibilities of Changi Airport's future terminal through an AI-powered, interactive mural in Zone 5, Come Imagine with T5.

Before leaving, visitors can purchase cuddly Buddy Bear merchandise, including keychain plushies, as souvenirs.

Five reasons to try ABB's Application Configurator

***Chandra Shekar – ABB's Product Owner** – is helping ABB Smart Power craft targeted digital tools for customers. We find out how his work on the new ABB Application Configurator is helping customers generate bill of materials faster for their projects.*

What is ABB's Application Configurator?

Designing an electrical system can be complex, time-consuming, and filled with potential errors. ABB's Application Configurator is here to change that. This powerful web-based tool streamlines electrical design, accelerates configuration, and ensures optimal product selection— all in just a few minutes. Whether you're working on motor starting and protection or EV charging infrastructure, this intuitive tool helps you design, configure, and order components effortlessly. Simply input your specifications, generate an architecture diagram, refine your selections, and in one click, receive a complete bill of materials and relevant documentation.

How does the Application Configurator save people time?

Navigating endless datasheets and product catalogs is tedious. Often, you already know what you need but struggle to quickly pinpoint the right components among thousands of options. With ABB's Application Configurator, you can generate a complete bill of materials in minutes instead of hours.

With a guided selection process, it reduces complexity and eliminate errors. You also no longer need to flip through catalogs: the tool just suggests the optimal configuration based on ABB's portfolio.From selecting the right circuit breaker for an EV charger to choosing control and protection devices for an LV motor, this tool streamlines the entire process—no guesswork required.

How does it improve productivity for engineers?

Time spent learning new software is time away from engineering. The Application Configurator is built for seamless integration into workflows. With user-friendly interface designed for both beginners and experts, navigation is quick and easy.

The Configurator is also integrated with other ABB digital tools, such as: SOC (Selected Optimized Coordination) for motor configuration tables; breaker selectivity tables for precise compatibility; master data for instant access to technical specifications; and E-Configure devices for hassle-free accessory configuration.

With an interface that guides you through the process, you can just focus on delivering for customers.

How can engineers make better choices, faster?

ABB's portfolio includes hundreds of thousands of products and configurations. Finding the best fit for design can be overwhelming—but not with the Application Configurator. It automatically selects the right products for specific applications and helps users choose accessories and complementary components, such as Emergency stop push buttons; Interface relays; Pilot lights; and




Voltage monitoring relays.
It suggests multiple solutions, allowing users to compare alternatives and make the best choice based on specifications, availability, and performance. No more second-guessing—just precise, optimized configurations at your fingertips.

How can the tool speed up delivery times?

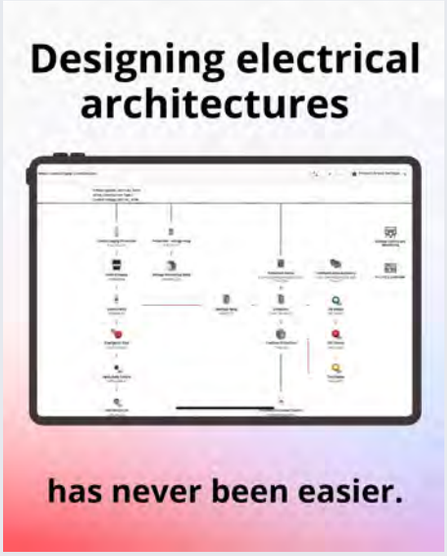
Avoid supply chain delays and reduce the risk of selecting incompatible components. The Application Configurator does more than just pick products—it optimizes based on life-cycle of the products. The tool automatically suggests core products based on its users with alternative options when certain products are unavailable and eliminates long wait times for out-of-stock items by offering in-stock alternatives.

With ABB's industry-leading expertise, the tool ensures the users design aligns with best practices and is tailored to their specific sector's needs.

How much does Application Configurator cost?

The Application Configurator is free for anyone to use—whether you're an existing ABB customer or new to ABB solutions. Simply create an account, input your project details, and start configuring your applications immediately. No prior ABB relationship is required and there is no cost.

Try ABB's Application Configurator today: https://campaign-el.abb.com/seab_five_reasons_to_try_application_configurator



About the Author

Chandra Shekar has been serving as the Product Owner of the Application Configurator at ABB's Smart Power Division since August 2023. With a solid foundation in customer application engineering, Chandra plays a key role in ensuring that the ABB Application Configurator delivers a seamless and intuitive user experience. His focus is on helping customers efficiently configure applications and generate a comprehensive bill of materials tailored to project needs. Chandra's deep understanding of user requirements—across different segments and end-use cases—enables him to craft targeted solutions that align with industry standards. His ability to translate customer needs into verified, application-specific configurations has significantly enhanced the configurator's functionality and usability. Chandra began his professional journey in 2006 as a Lab Test Engineer for motor starting and safety products in Bangalore, India. Over the years, he has taken on a range of roles within ABB India's Smart Power Division, including Engineer Development, Testing & In-process Quality, Engineer Service, and Engineer Project & Process Quality. In 2013, he moved to the United Arab Emirates as a Product Marketing Specialist, and in 2021, stepped into a global role as Global Application Specialist. He holds a diploma in Electrical and Electronics Engineering and an MBA in Marketing Management from India. Chandra currently resides in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Columbia Circle Phase II

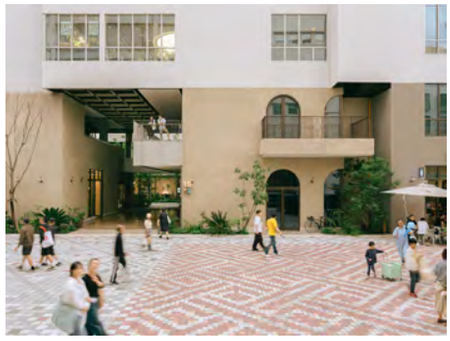
Columbia Circle Phase II, located at No. 1262 West Yan'an Road in Shanghai, extends Columbia Circle, which first opened in 2018. The initial phase focused on preserving the historical buildings from the 1920s, like the Sunke Villa and the Columbia Country Club. Now in its second phase, the project aims to integrate modern architecture with these historical structures while preserving urban memories.

Phase II introduces five new multi-storey buildings and open spaces, such as connecting streets, courtyards, and a plaza, to create a vibrant community that blends commercial, office, leisure, entertainment, and cultural incubation.

The Oval Partnership's strategic planning ensures harmony with Phase I's historical architecture. Covering 24,000 sqm, the project features smaller structural units with enhanced accessibility through elevated corridors and pedestrian networks, taking ventilation, natural lighting, and shading into consideration.

Phase II offers a diverse layout; commercial and dining spaces occupy the first two floors, while the upper floors house offices and venues for cultural and sporting activities. The site integrates cultural and creative industries, commerce, dining, and retail, serving as a central hub for the locals. Public squares host events, and recreational zones offer pop-ups and seasonal experiences. Facilities like the sports park, leisure corridors, and cultural art galleries cater to residents' needs for relaxation and cultural exploration. Leasing efforts focus on attracting outdoor sports, sustainable, and lifestyle brands.

Columbia Circle Phase II incorporates extensive green spaces to enhance placemaking, with layered greenery creating a tranquil ambience.



Outdoor dining and recreational spaces encourage interaction and connection between visitors. Furthermore, spacious areas and large staircases provide venues for performances and parties, promoting cultural exchange. Rooftop gardens, small terraces, and gardens invite visitors to explore traces of urban development.

The façade design is a highlight, featuring beige and grey hues that echo Phase I's aesthetics. By utilising natural materials and industrial aesthetics, Columbia Circle Phase II restores the charm of bygone architecture. Brutalist materials, such as washed and rough stone, offer raw textures that were present in Phase I. The functionalist Bauhaus design, with bold, minimalist lines, contrasts playfully with Phase I's industrial structures.

Actively preserving urban historical and cultural heritage, Columbia Circle Phase II simplifies and fuses architectural forms with modern elements, creating iconic façades. Historical fragments, such as archways, are embedded into the design, blending old memories with present-day architecture. Likewise, the façades incorporate materials from historical buildings as a tribute to the old structures. These historical elements add compelling stories and modern significance, allowing visitors to trace the site's urban development.

Since its opening in 2018, Columbia Circle has been pivotal in Shanghai's urban renewal. By expanding the city's narratives, it preserves and weaves together Shanghai's unique historical and modern memories. Phase II highlights the role of history and culture in reshaping communities, sparking dialogue on wellness within cultural heritage and urban development.

› PROJECT DETAILS

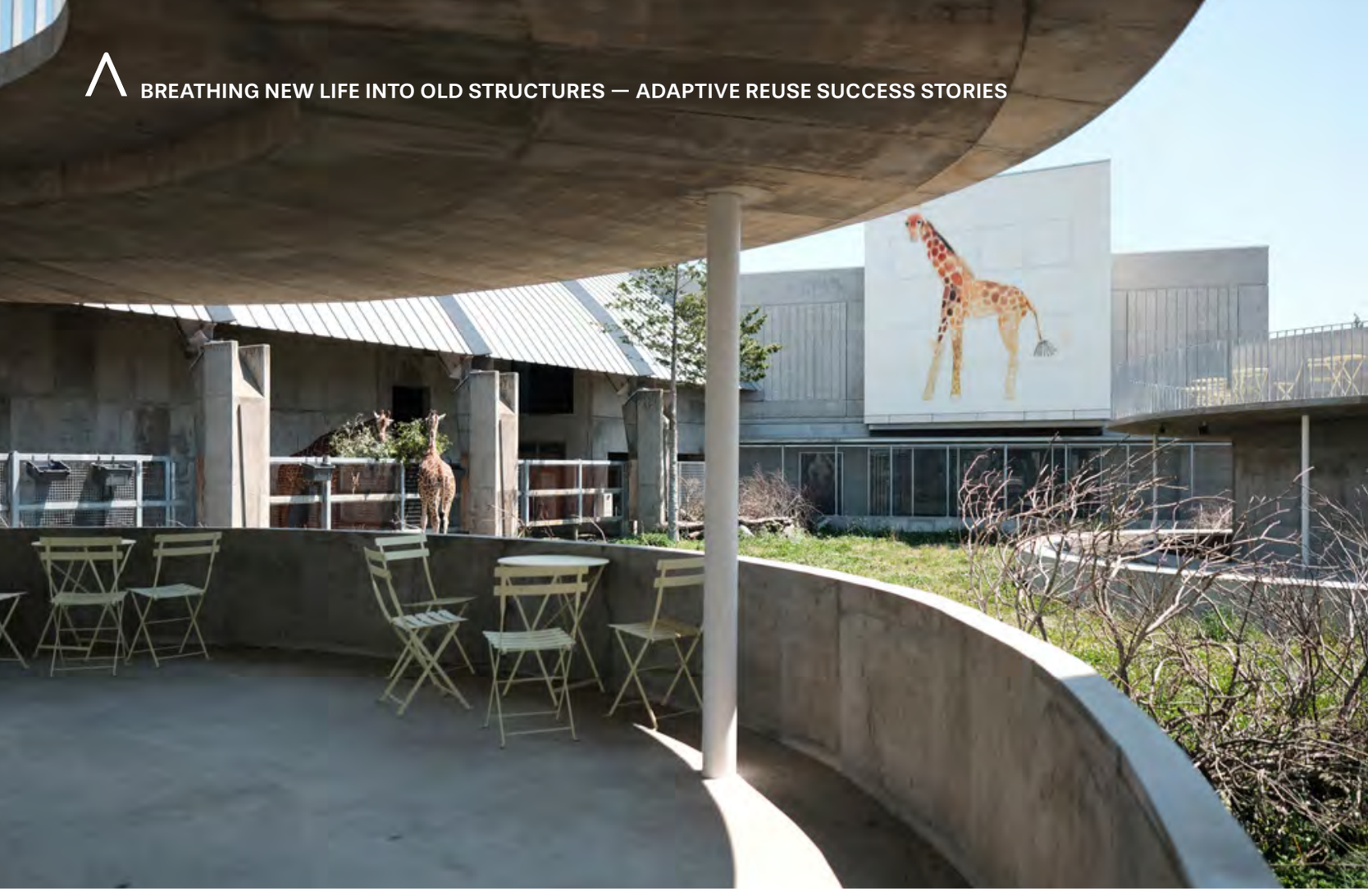
Location: Shanghai, China
Size: 24,938 sqm
Completion: 2024
Architect: The Oval Partnership
Client: China Vanke Co., Ltd.
Photographer: Zhu Yumeng

Kasumigaura Lake Community Place

Two hours away from Tokyo and located beside Lake Kasumigaura, Kasumigaura Lake Community Place is a public works project that utilised the PFI (Private Finance Initiative) model. Architect firm TAKAHASHI IPPEI OFFICE collaborated with a company that initially was engaged in livestock farming and undertook the facility design from the planning stage.

In an era where the Earth is overflowing with artificial objects, the design team's goal was to reorganise the former science museum and plaza and return them to nature. By dismantling the old human-centred architecture and allowing nature—light, wind, rain, greenery, and animals—to move in, the new structures serve as a "gateway to nature", bringing humanity and nature close together.

By combining architectural activities such as construction, demolition, renovation, and reconstruction,



TAKAHASHI IPPEI OFFICE created a new architectural concept: an environment where both humans and nature are the subjects, divergent from modern era construction. One such example is the giraffe's courtyard, which retained the existing roof and expanded the living area into an open-air space. This allows giraffes the freedom to enter and exit the courtyard while creating a passageway for wind, light, and wild birds. The pathways serve as part of the visitor circulation route, connecting it to the rest of the facility.

In the goat's habitat, the large staircase that once served as the main approach to the existing building has been dismantled to create a climbing area for the animals. Now, the previously unused space beneath the stairs has been repurposed as an animal habitat.

The concrete promenade terrace, running along the perimeter and meandering between the buildings and the surroundings, serves as architecture that provides experiences, evoking new insights from a fourth-person perspective that exists outside human society, intermingling established orders and opposing concepts.

Kasumigaura Lake Community Place is a prime example of how pre-existing architecture can be repurposed for more than just humanity. By going beyond preconceived expectations, the project shows how architecture can be repurposed and integrated into nature to serve local wildlife and visitors, connecting humans back to their roots.

› PROJECT DETAILS

Project Name: Kasumigaura Lake Community Place
Usage: Museum, Zoo, Community Facilities
Location: Ibaraki, Japan
Construction Period: June 2022–July, 2024
Architecture: TAKAHASHI IPPEI OFFICE
Structure engineer: Konishi Structural Engineers
Equipment: Kankyo Engineering
Construction: OKABE + Jonan Green System
Site area: 21,756.86 sqm
Building area: 4,025.27 sqm
Total floor area: 4,968.29 sqm
Number of floors: 2
Photo: TAKAHASHI IPPEI OFFICE

Lakshmi Mills

In an era marked by rapid urbanisation and greenfield development, India's cities are grappling with the challenge of vehicle-centric planning and a critical scarcity of genuine communal spaces. Against this backdrop, a cluster of erstwhile cotton mills has been given new life.

Once the home of Lakshmi Mills, one of India's oldest yarn and fabric manufacturing companies, it now stands

Phase I

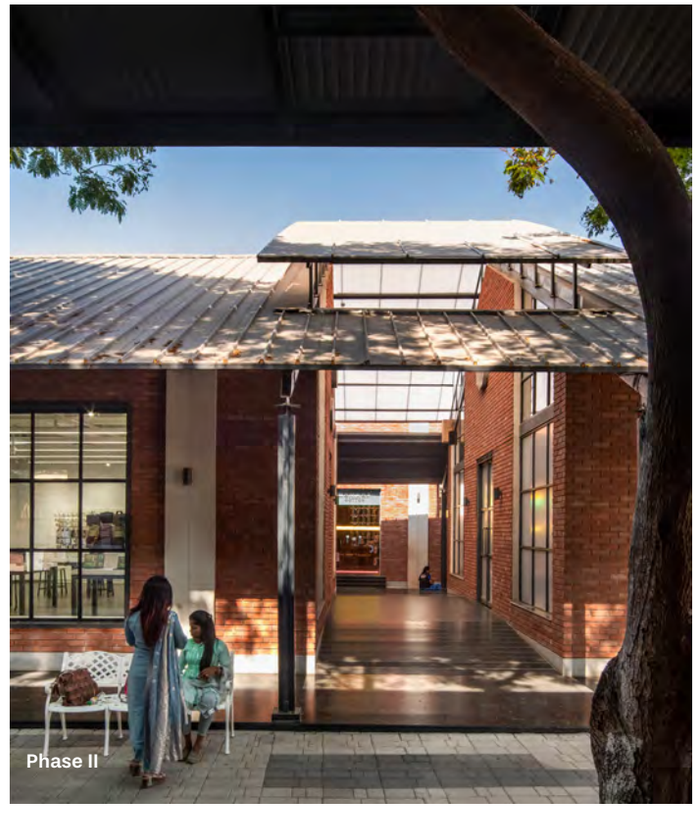
Phase I


Phase II

as the focal point of a redevelopment initiative—one that exemplifies the potential of adaptive reuse and placemaking in revitalising underutilised urban areas and fostering a deeper sense of connection between people and their cities.

Straddling a major traffic artery, the site operates as a walkable community hub with a host of public functions. A visually permeable boundary wall was designed to blur the lines between the precinct and the surrounding neighbourhood. Certain structures and sheds were earmarked for removal or reconfigured to enhance circulation and functionality, and vehicular access was restricted to the periphery to prioritise walkability and create a pedestrian-friendly environment.

As a counterpoint to the site's industrial landscape, open green areas and avenues lined with shade-giving trees have been incorporated into the design scheme, offering respite from the urban bustle. Secondary walkways have been reinforced, linking public nodes and providing diverse routes for circulation, further encouraging exploration and discovery. Wayfinding totems are thoughtfully placed to improve connectivity, while historical accounts and plaques elevate the experience by facilitating guided narrative walks and tours.


Phase II

Phase II

The design team at Studio Lotus had a clear approach towards revitalisation, driven by the promoters' desire to preserve the site's legacy. This included honouring the mills' original architectural features and quirks, including the industrial shell, existing roofing system, and structural elements. Exposed brick walls and steel beams complement contemporary finishes, creating a unique blend of old and new that speaks to the site's industrial heritage.

Retaining most structures yielded a measurable impact: the project limited embodied carbon to 105 $kgCO_2e/m^2$—an 82% reduction from the 600 $kgCO_2e/m^2$ a new building would have consumed.

The phased redevelopment has already converted about 60% of the site into a bustling hub of activity. Anchored by several international brands and a curated selection of local businesses, the place attracts an average of 2,500–3,500 visitors on weekdays, swelling to 6,000–10,000 on weekends. Anticipating the level of engagement, ample parking provisions were incorporated from the outset, ensuring a seamless visitor experience.

The ongoing development of an expansive indoor street market promises to further solidify Lakshmi Mills as a vibrant epicentre of commerce and culture in Coimbatore. Newly established businesses have reported a 15–20% increase in sales compared to initial projections, indicating their substantial contribution to the revitalisation of the area.

Proactive programming and placemaking strategies have been integral to the project from the outset. Even as the renovation progresses in the third phase, the precinct remains a dynamic, ever-evolving space. Plans for a container food park, outdoor screening areas, and interactive kiosks promise to further enrich the visitor experience. The project's development continues to emphasise the ideas of community, sustainability, and architectural innovation, promising a vibrant and beloved destination for generations to come.


Phase II


Phase II

› PROJECT DETAILS

Design Firm: Studio Lotus
Design Team: Ambrish Arora, Sidhartha Talwar, Yatin Tokas, Somik Beura, Raunak Raj, Subrata Ray, Shamik Chatterjee, Mohit Chopra
Client's Firm: Lakshmi Mills Company LTD
Photographers: Suryan and Dang, Saurabh Suryan
Scope: Adaptive Reuse, Master Planning, Architecture
Site Area: 21 acres
Built-Up Area (Phase 1): 1,20,000 sqft
Built-Up Area (Phase 2): 30,000 sqft
Start Date: 2021 April
Completion Date: April 2023 (Phase 1), September 2024 (Phase 2)

Aquagreen Solutions Experience Centre

In the midst of labyrinth lanes in CC Lakda Bazaar and amongst the folds of southern Mumbai, the Aquagreen Solutions Experience Centre is nestled in an atmosphere rich in character. Rickety wheels of haathgaadis against the cobbled pathways, the clucking of sauntering hens, the buzz of saws slicing through timber, and the earthy fragrance of wood that intoxicates the air illustrate the vibrant montage of one's rendezvous with the locale.

Exploring adaptive reuse to create a sustainable milieu, the Aquagreen Solutions Experience Centre sits upon a deep, rectilinear site spanning 11 feet by 77 feet, stealthily blending into its surroundings. Wearing a semipermeable skin of ochre below and white above, the façade fuses perforated metal and corrugated cement sheet fins, coyly obscuring the interiors.


"WATER IS AN INTRINSIC PART OF LIFE ON EARTH. AQUAGREEN® BRINGS YOU CUTTING EDGE TECHNOLOGIES WHICH PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT & MAKE YOUR LIFE SIMPLER. OUR SOLUTIONS ARE DESIGNED TO MAKE YOUR LIFE HEALTHIER & SAFER."

Previously, the premises functioned as an inventory warehouse with minimal human intervention. The newly scripted programme reconfigures the volume, assigning functions to various levels while reinforcing a contiguous design thread. The structure houses vehicular access and a staff area at the street level. Climbing up the central stairwell to the first level leads to the live experience centre and product display zones. The uppermost level comprises the CEO's cabin and a meeting space.

The structure is straightforward yet modern, adorned with tactile textures that preserve its gritty demeanour. Exposed brickwork, compressed blocks made from recycled debris, natural wall plaster, and micro-concrete are leitmotifs throughout the design. The built form is porous, its roof punctured with skylights that invite daylight in. The central stairwell is a playful LEGO-esque construction of perforated MS members that were once storage uprights.

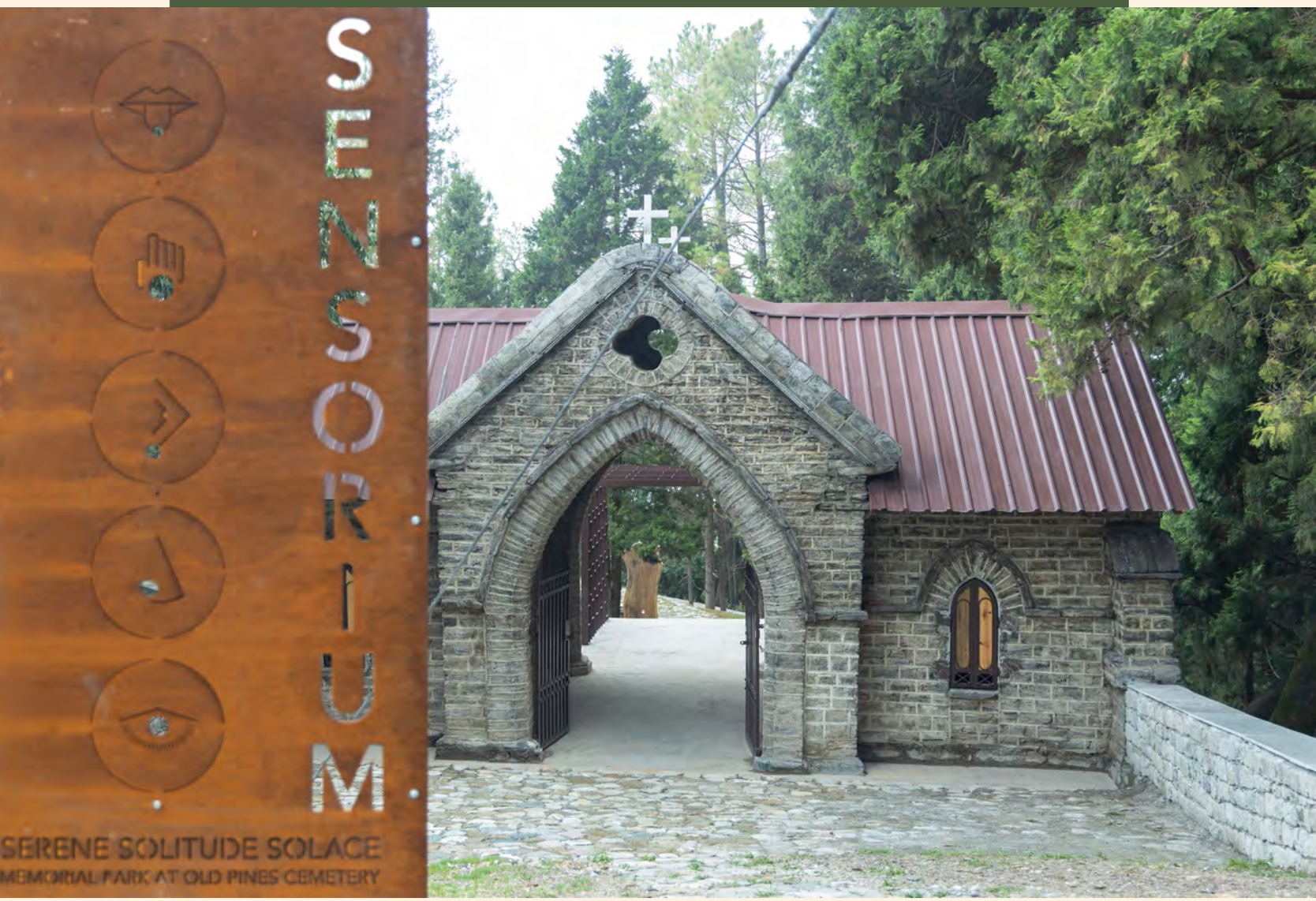
Upstairs, the customer experience zone ups the ante—the space's walls transform from starkly linear to sinuous, forming a concrete, live shower cubicle that bleeds terracotta on the inside. These walls wind and manifest as a discussion nook and a concrete-swathed coffee bar that enjoys slivered views of the streetscape. The cabin and meeting pods on the uppermost level echo rooted sensibilities, with views of soaring skyscrapers forming a dichotomous backdrop to the pulse of Lakda Bazaar below.

Unassuming yet imaginative, the Aquagreen Solutions Experience Centre is rooted in its culture and location. Going beyond the surface, the project beckons visitors in to discover a new and subversive experience.

› PROJECT DETAILS

Completion Year: 2024
Principal Designers: Huzefa Rangwala and Jasem Pirani
Team Members: Abhishek Ajwani, Aishwarya Lakhani, Hussain Mukadam, Bhavin Mandot
Project Area: 1500 sqft
Photographer: Talib Chitalwala

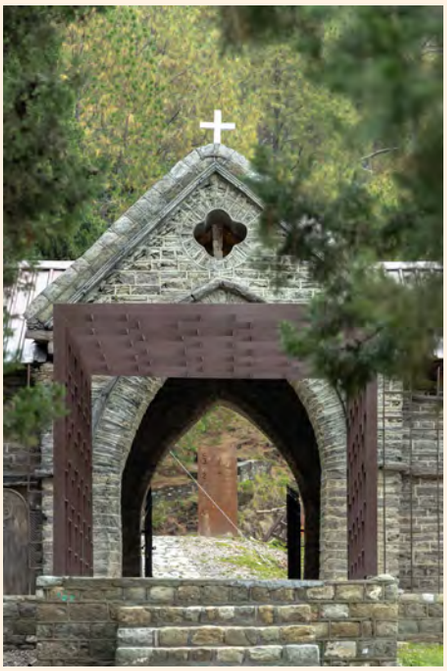
Sensorium Park



Sensorium Park is a contemplative blend of historical preservation and ecological sensitivity. Once a seemingly unsafe space, the site was marked by overgrowth and neglect, its history hidden beneath layers of time.

Nestled within the serene pine forests of Uttarakhand, this 1850s British-era cemetery has been reimagined as a public sanctuary for reflection and sensory exploration. The Uttarakhand Government's brief aimed to transform this forgotten space into an accessible site for all. Compartment S4 took a more nuanced approach, honouring the site's ecological and historical significance through minimal yet impactful interventions that breathed new life into the cemetery, transforming it into a meaningful public space.

"The initial brief from the Uttarakhand Government was to make the cemetery accessible and safer, transforming what had become a neglected and seemingly unsafe space into a public area. However, from the very first discussions, it was clear that this could not be approached as a conventional park or redevelopment project," commented a spokesperson from Compartment S4. " The site carried emotional, historical, and ecological weight. Our conversations gradually shifted from questions of access and upkeep to deeper ones—about memory, reverence, and how much intervention was appropriate. The brief evolved into creating a space that could be visited, experienced, and inhabited gently, without erasing or overpowering its past."



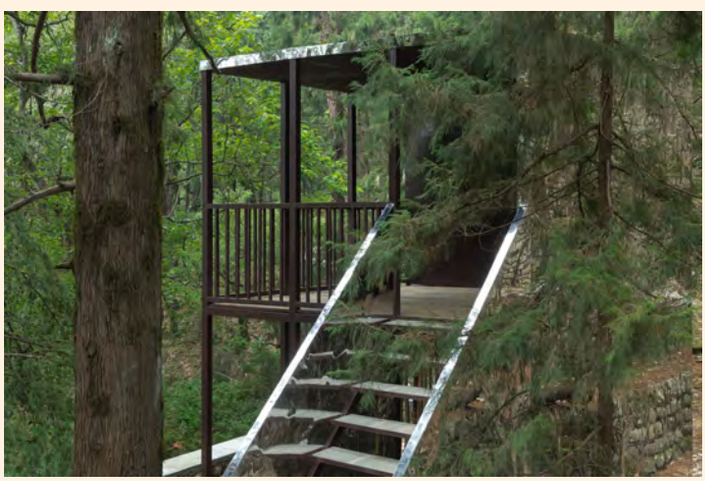
Upon excavation, graves were uncovered, revealing an unspoken history possibly tied to the First World War, though no clear records or archives exist to identify the individuals buried there. This absence of documentation adds to the park's reverence, making its preservation all the more vital.

"The space felt heavy, quiet, and deeply layered. Dense overgrowth had almost erased visible traces of its history, yet there was a palpable presence that demanded respect. ... This absence of recorded history made the place even more powerful. It offered the possibility of becoming not just a preserved cemetery, but a space where absence itself could be acknowledged—where memory, even when incomplete, could be held with care."

The design intervention was intentionally minimal, allowing the park's natural beauty and layered history to remain at the forefront. Soft interventions, such as small pathways, were carefully introduced with an environmentally-sensitive approach, avoiding overwhelming the existing ecology while offering a powerful, contemplative experience for visitors.

"The greatest challenge was working within an ecologically sensitive forest while respecting the sanctity of a burial ground. Construction had to be minimal, reversible, and carefully phased. Every intervention was questioned for its necessity and impact. We worked closely with local teams and adopted low-impact construction techniques to ensure minimal disturbance to existing flora and fauna. The challenge was not technical alone—it was ethical. And that required constant dialogue within the team."

The intervention was guided by a thoughtful design approach, rooted in the idea of a journey—both physical and metaphysical. The aim was not merely to restore the site but to reinterpret its narrative, offering visitors an experience that honours its historical significance while engaging them in a sensory exploration of life, memory, and nature.



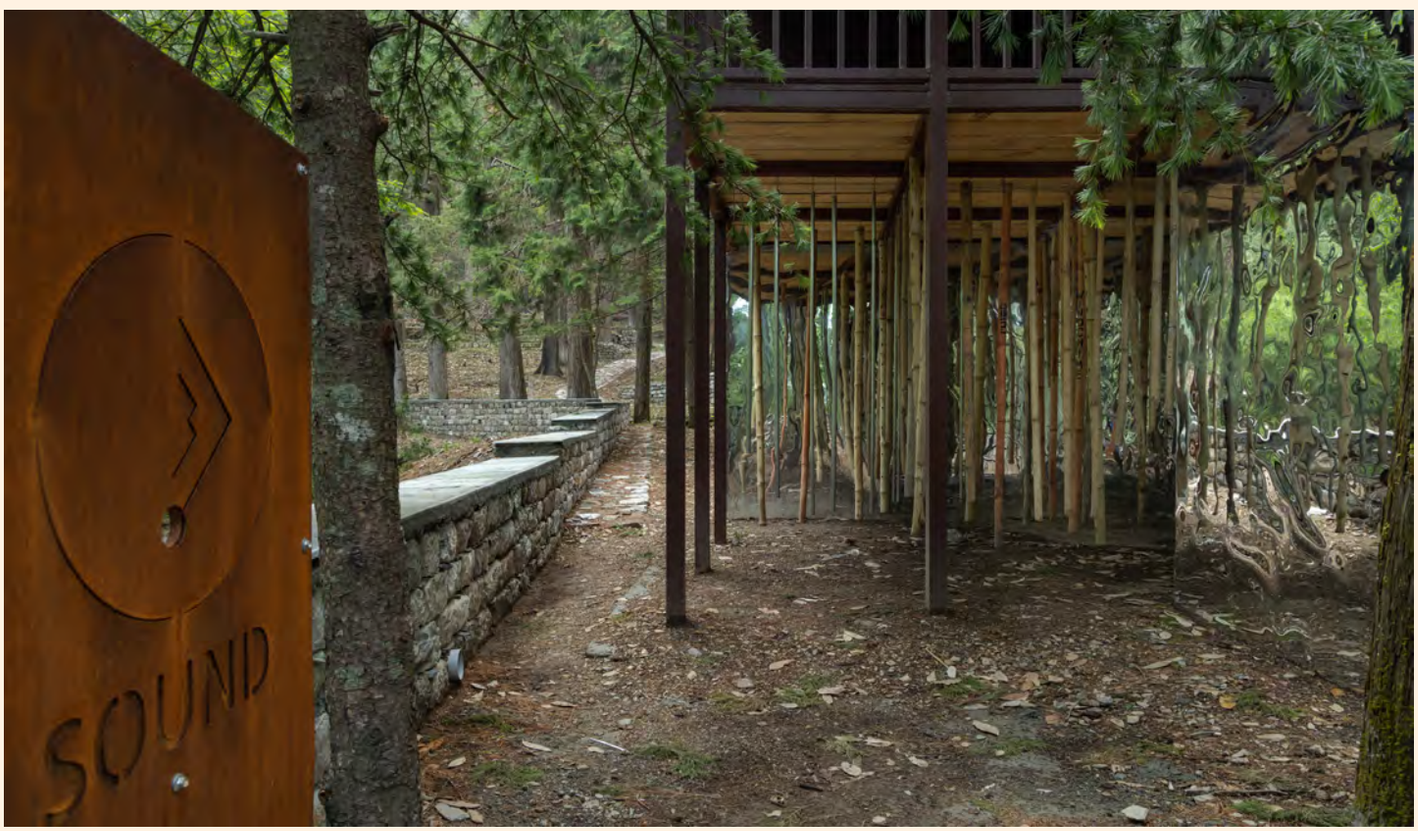
Today, Sensorium Park transcends its origins, offering not just a historical narrative but also a space where the living can connect with the departed. Yet its transformation prompts critical questions: How should we navigate the legacy of colonial cemeteries? Can their purpose as symbols of empire be reconciled with their modern-day reinterpretation as inclusive public spaces? And does reimagining these sites dilute their historical identity, or does it breathe new life into forgotten narratives?

"Demystifying the space without sanitising it became central to the approach. The design avoids overt memorialisation, allowing people to enter without the pressure of ritual. A meandering stone pathway guides visitors gently through the site, encouraging slow movement and exploration rather than confrontation. By integrating sensory experiences—light, sound, touch, and scent—the space becomes less about death and more about life, presence, and reflection. This shift allows people to inhabit the park intuitively, whether they come to walk, pause, or simply be."

Sensorium's design thoughtfully integrates history and modernity, with the winding stone path serving as the narrative thread that ties the entire plot together. Rather than a typical linear pathway, it meanders organically through the forest, encouraging exploration and quiet contemplation. The restored original gate by the entrance, complemented by a contemporary metal structure, reflects the sensitive balance between preserving the past and introducing contemporary relevance.

The design of the cemetery is deeply rooted in its sensorial philosophy, encouraging visitors to connect

with the space through a series of thoughtfully placed installations that engage the five senses. As visitors wander the park, their visual senses are drawn to a mirror-clad cabin that offers a reflective experience. The air is filled with the harmonious melodies of a human-sized bamboo wind chime, its sounds merging with the gentle rustling of leaves. The fragrant deodar wood planks evoke the forest's vitality, while the taste is subtly activated in a dedicated garden of edible fruit and berry trees. As visitors trace their path, their hands touch the textured stone and bark along the trail, grounding them in the natural environment.



"The mirror-clad glass cabin was conceived as a moment of visual disorientation and reflection—both literal and metaphorical. By reflecting the forest, it almost disappears into its surroundings, prompting visitors to see themselves as part of the landscape rather than separate from it. ... Each installation is subtle on its own, but together they create a complete sensory journey. The journey culminates in a colourful installation, a powerful metaphor for the circle of life."

Here, visitors are invited to meditate on the interconnectedness of life and death, seated in a natural culvert sculpted into stone. The signage, crafted from different materials like corten steel, etched wood, and acrylic, subtly guides visitors without disrupting the surrounding landscape. While each installation offers a distinct sensory experience, they collectively form a holistic journey that engages all senses.

With these design interventions, the park offers an immersive, metaphysical journey where visitors navigate not only the landscape but also the intangible realms of memory, presence, and the flow of time. By embracing this approach, the design blends cultural sensitivity, minimalism, and environmental sustainability, respecting the memories attached to this site. The park does not announce its presence but instead creates a space for quiet contemplation, allowing the metaphysical to emerge through its restrained design. The programme takes precedence, with the design seamlessly following, ensuring harmony with the site's history, community, and natural landscape.

The subtle transformation of Sensorium Park raises enduring questions about how we choose to preserve and reinterpret the past. Walking through its winding trails, surrounded by the whispers of history and the vibrancy of life, one is reminded that the act of restoration is as much about asking questions as it is about finding answers.

"By transforming a space traditionally associated with fear or exclusion into an inclusive, contemplative public realm, the park challenges conventional ideas of cemeteries in India and proposes a new way of engaging with sites of memory—one that is gentle, inclusive, and deeply human."

PROJECT DETAILS

PROJECT NAME: Sensorium Park
STUDIO NAME: Compartment s4
DESIGN TEAM: Manuni Patel, Kishan Shah, Krishna Parikh, Nishita Parmar, Monik Shah, Aman Amin, Vedanti Agarwal, Prasik Chaudhari
CLIENT: Nainital Collectorate, Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam
LOCATION: Nainital, Uttarakhand
CARPET AREA: 7050 sqm
PHOTOGRAPHY: The Space Tracing Company

St. Joseph's Church and Parochial House

Located along Victoria Street, Singapore, the massive restoration and renovation project by ONG&ONG comprised the St. Joseph's Church, a National Monument, and the Parochial House, a conserved building. Rich in history and culture, this delicate project started in 2017 and was completed in 2024.

St. Joseph's Church

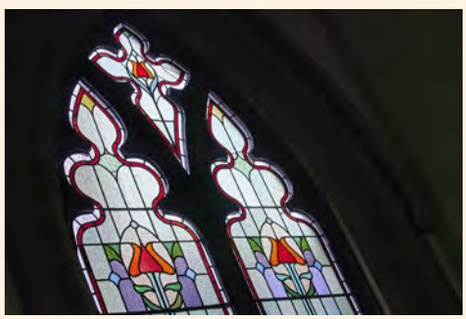
One can trace the church's roots to the 1500s, when Malacca was conquered by Alfonso de Albuquerque and came under Portuguese rule. The resulting Eurasian community gradually spread throughout Southeast Asia, including Singapore. Starting with just 12 Catholics in 1825 under the Diocese of Macau, the congregation swelled to over 1,300 by the turn of the 20th century.

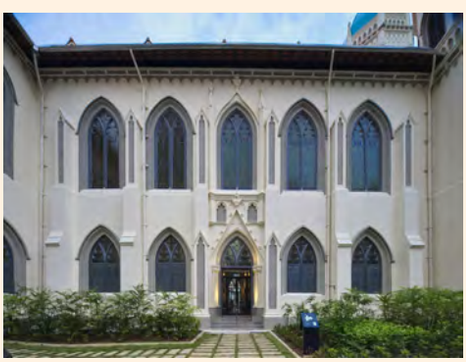
The current St. Joseph's Church dates back to 1912, and was gazetted as a National Monument of Singapore in 2005. Based on a neo-Gothic style and constructed by Riley Hargreaves & Co, the building takes on the form of a Latin cross when seen from above. It is a design that reflects the beliefs and aesthetics of its time period, influenced greatly by the geopolitical culture in Southeast Asia.

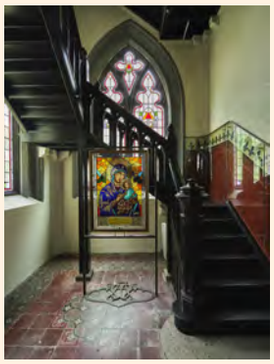
By 2017, after over a century of continuous use, interspersed with several minor renovations, the building was in dire need of thorough restoration. The process involved multiple stakeholders, including the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), and the National Heritage Board (NHB). ONG&ONG was appointed to manage the mammoth project, bringing in experts from as far afield as Europe to be consulted on the conservation of important features and artifacts.

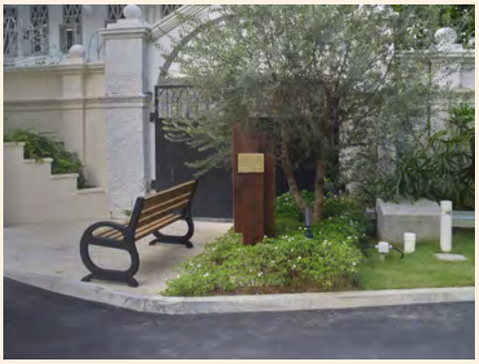
Having been constructed atop marine clay, settlement over the decades meant the building's structure had shifted—particularly its roof trusses, which were found to be inclined between three and five degrees towards the south. These had to be set straight, restored, or replaced.

The sagging cantilevered choir loft was replaced with one undergirded by a steel frame. The ground slab, also cracked and slanted, had to be reconstructed and realigned. After crucial structural works were carried out to secure the building and its walls were re-plastered, re-bars







and a waterproofing membrane were installed to stabilise and secure the ground slab in accordance with contemporary requirements.

The church's unique features and contents required thorough cleaning and refinishing, including all the statuary and its many remarkable stained-glass windows fabricated by Jules Dobbeklare, a Belgian who also designed the stained glass inside the chapel at CHIJMES (an earlier ONG&ONG conservation project).

Discoveries were made during this process. While cleaning and polishing the high altar of white and coloured Italian marble, it was found to have a unique pink shade. Another rediscovered feature is a mural of fleur-de-lis motifs dating to 1912, with the lily having strong associations with St. Joseph.

Wooden fittings such as the original teak ambo (akin to a pulpit) and worshipers' pews were all sanded down and re-stained, while around 60% of the original encaustic floor tiles were restored, with the rest replaced.

ONG&ONG also undertook the challenging task of modernizing the building while preserving its historically significant architectural elements. This included installing air conditioning in the church hall and ensuring the monument met contemporary fire codes. For example, Dormer windows were reintroduced into the church roof based on archival photographs of the building, and now function as external smoke vents in the event of a fire.

As a designated heritage site, information plaques were added to highlight key points of interest in and around the church. The landscaping had also transformed, with greenery planted around the church compound. This subtle external scheme of trees and shrubs enhances the decorative role of nature in the relief work and carvings found in the building. Worshippers can also find niches within the landscape for contemplation and prayer—the reflective pool by the church entrance and an area with benches facing a grotto shaded by willowy trees serve as quiet and tranquil moments for reflection.

Including delays due to the pandemic, the restoration of St. Joseph's Church took five years. Nonetheless, worshippers and heritage lovers alike all agree that the result was well worth the wait.

With its careful considerations and elegant finishes, the refurbished St. Joseph's Church stands as a symbol of Singapore's heritage and ongoing legacy.

Parochial House

Within the compound of St. Joseph's Church is Parochial House, a 112-year-old building that emerged anew from a seven-year restoration and renovation project carried out alongside the conservation works for the main church.

Dating back to 1825 and designed by Donald McLeod Craik in the Portuguese Baroque style with Gothic accents, it was originally the headquarters of the Portuguese Mission in Singapore. The three-storey building was gazetted for conservation







by the Urban Redevelopment Authority in June 2016.

Today, Parochial House continues to serve as an annex to the main church, functioning as an office and residence for the staff and priests of the parish. The landmark also houses several Catholic artefacts of significance, including a relic of the Holy Cross.

Parochial House's restoration included the encaustic floor tiles, nine sets of azulejo tiles depicting scenes from the Bible, and unique architectural features—one such example being the coat of arms of Joao Paulino d 'Azevedo e Castro, Bishop of Macau from 1903 to 1918. Other artefacts that were restored are the throne of the Bishop of Macau, a roundel above the main entrance with the letters "PM" for Portuguese Mission, and a desk once used by the visiting Bishops of Macau.

A grand staircase winds upwards at the heart of the building, decorated with a carved wooden balustrade, sanded and polished to its former glory. In terms of modernization, a lift was inserted with lobbies on each floor to improve accessibility, a fire escape staircase was added in a corner of the building to bring it up to code, and the building is now air-conditioned throughout.

The external walls were painted a pleasing beige shade, harmonizing with the other buildings in the compound. Across the façades, all statuary was carefully cleaned and repainted. Additionally, adapting to Singapore's current climate, the five-foot way along Victoria Street was raised to resolve the issue of periodic flooding.

The Parochial House received a refreshed internal layout to suit the needs of the church. The street-level rooms retained their public-facing purposes, with a large hall, choir room, and lounge rooms for various functions. On the second level, offices for staff and priests were implemented, while the third level hosts a private chapel, additional offices, and accommodations for priests and other visiting members of the priesthood.

Interstitial spaces such as the verandas on the upper floors were also conserved. Warm cove lighting was integrated into new ceiling panels, giving all rooms a soft, gentle illumination.

Parochial House was reopened and blessed by Cardinal William Goh on 19 March 2024, the church's feast day. Paired with St. Joseph's Church, the compound breathes new life, respectfully upholding the past while looking to the future.

PROJECT DETAILS

LOCATION: Victoria Street, Singapore
SCOPE OF WORK: Architecture, Landscape by ONG&ONG
COMPLETION: Main Church: April 2022; Parochial House: March 2024
CLIENT: St Joseph's Church
GFA: 3,231.4 sqm

Lionel Leow from TA.LE Architects shares about the importance of conservation and navigating local laws in design

Lionel Leow, Co-founder and Principal Architect of TA.LE Architects

In ever-changing urban skylines like Singapore, commercial buildings are often deemed obsolete and earmarked for demolition around the 10-to 15-year mark. With this anticipated lifespan in mind, architects and related bodies are increasingly looking to refurbishment over demolition for a multitude of reasons.

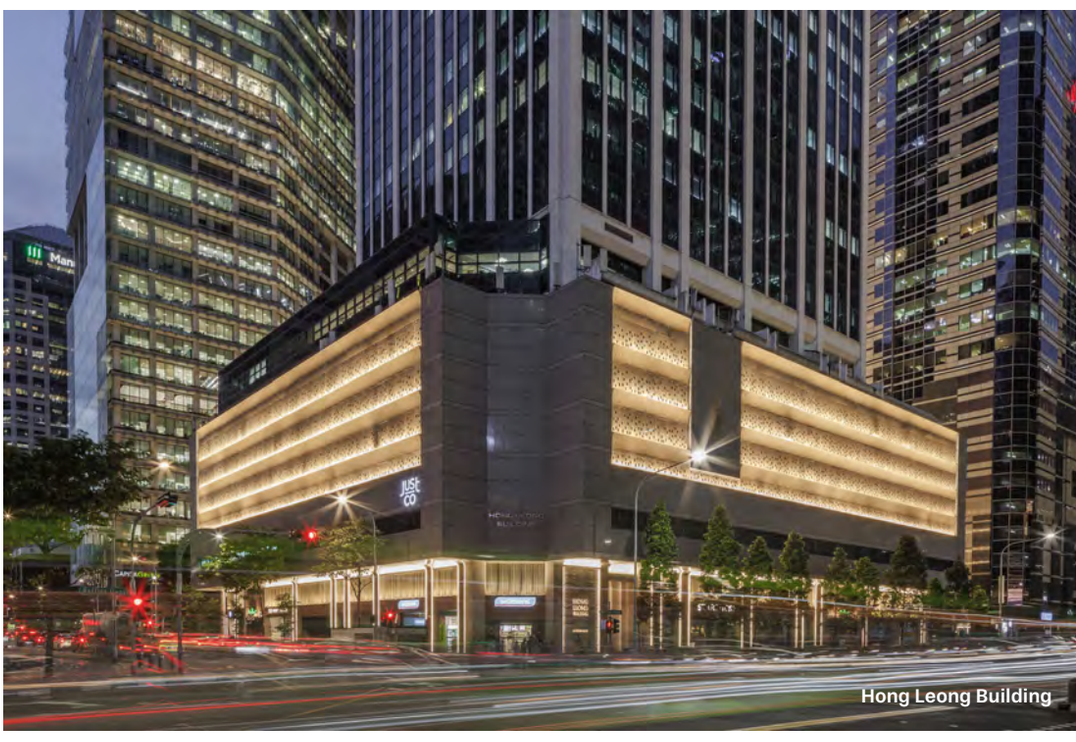
One such case study is the iconic Hong Leong Building, a landmark of Singapore's 1970s skyline in the heart of the CBD. The new renovation led by TA.LE Architects has extended the building's lifespan for at least another 20 years, offering a sustainable blueprint for Asia's future built environment.

By adopting an adaptive reuse strategy, the team retained over 95% of the original structure while upgrading it to meet modern office standards. This approach preserved a piece of CBD history while being environmentally successful, significantly cutting carbon emissions during construction activities and optimising the building's systems, reducing its daily operational environmental footprint.

In line with Singapore's Green Plan 2030, such projects are critical to meet the government's goals. Revitalised buildings can be high-performing, energy-efficient assets that anchor a low-carbon circular economy.

Southeast Asia Building spoke to Lionel Leow, Co-founder and Principal Architect of TA.LE Architects, about conservation projects in Singapore and their benefits. He also discussed navigating design within Singapore's conservation laws and how he foresees these regulations changing to support a more environmentally-friendly society.

Q: Please introduce TA.LE and the firm's experience in adaptive reuse.



Hong Leong Building

A: TA.LE Architects is a Singapore-based practice with a strong focus on architecture that is contextual, sustainable, and rooted in long-term urban thinking. Over the years, we have developed deep expertise in adaptive reuse and refurbishment across a wide range of building typologies, from conserved shophouses to large-scale commercial and mixed-use assets.

Our portfolio includes conservation projects such as shophouse restorations, as well as major asset enhancement initiatives like City Square Mall, ESR BizPark @ Changi, Nordic European Centre, and, most recently, the Hong Leong Building. These projects have allowed us to work at different scales while navigating regulatory frameworks, technical constraints, and operational requirements. We see adaptive reuse not as a limitation, but as an opportunity to extend the life of buildings through careful architectural intervention.

Q: Recently, TA.LE was in charge of refurbishing the Hong Leong Building in Singapore. Please tell us about the renovation. How did TA.LE approach this project, and what were the key considerations and intended outcomes?

A: The Hong Leong Building is a 40-year-old commercial building constructed during Singapore's national building years. Our approach was guided by the principle of renewal rather than replacement, which means extending the building's lifespan while upgrading its performance, experience, and relevance.

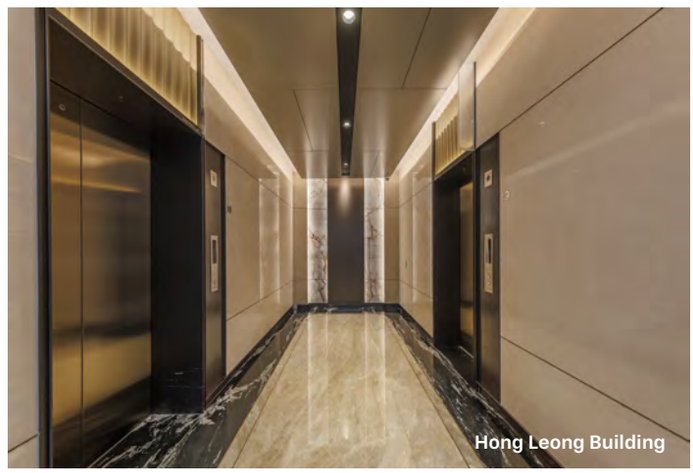
Key considerations included retaining as much of the existing structure and façade as possible, minimising embodied carbon, and keeping the building operational throughout construction. The existing granite façade was deliberately preserved, while the podium frontage and covered walkways were refreshed to improve urban engagement. A new decorative metal screen was introduced to the naturally ventilated car park façade, enhancing architectural expression without compromising passive ventilation.

The intended outcome was a building that performs better environmentally, offers a significantly improved user experience, and remains recognisable as part of Singapore's architectural continuum.

Q: Are there any particular conservation laws that architectural firms have to keep in mind when approaching adaptive reuse projects? Please elaborate on the ease or difficulties of navigating such laws and how they affect the design scope of the project.

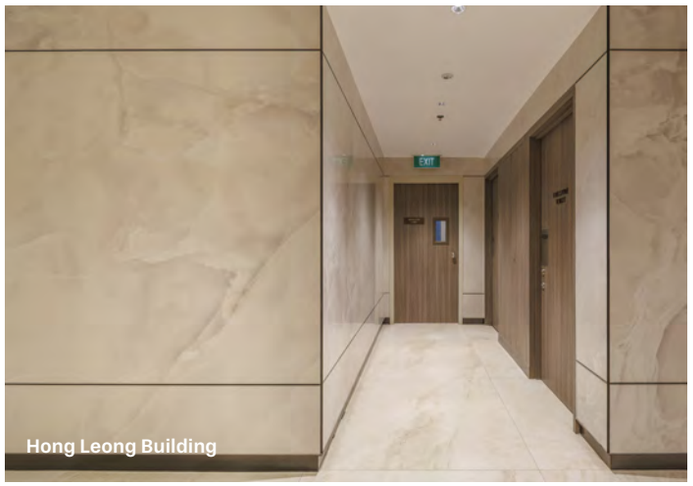
A: In Singapore, architects must navigate guidelines from authorities such as the URA (Urban Redevelopment Authority), Building and Construction Authority (BCA), and the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), particularly where existing buildings intersect with conservation principles, fire safety upgrades, and accessibility requirements. While the Hong Leong Building is not gazetted as a conserved building,

Hong Leong Building


Hong Leong Building


Hong Leong Building


Hong Leong Building


Hong Leong Building

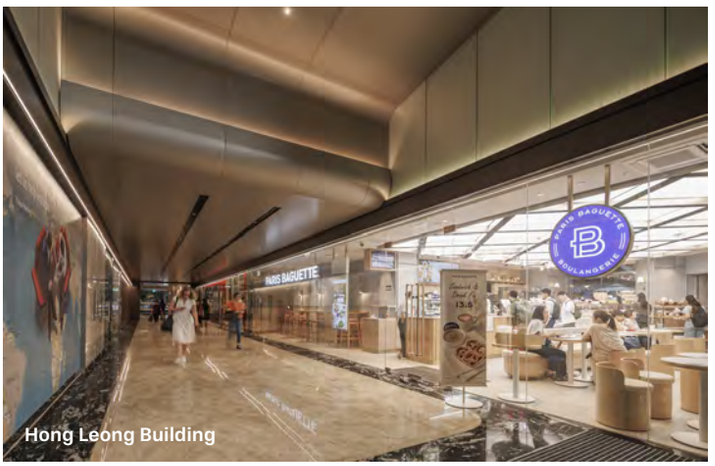
it still falls within a regulatory environment that governs alterations to existing structures.

The challenge often lies in aligning modern performance standards, such as fire safety, barrier-free access, and building services, with legacy building configurations. These regulations shape the design scope, often requiring creative architectural and technical solutions rather than straightforward replacement.

Q: How have conservation laws changed over the years, and how has this impacted architecture firms in refurbishment projects?

A: Conservation and refurbishment regulations have evolved to become more performance-based rather than purely


Hong Leong Building


Hong Leong Building


Hong Leong Building

City Square Mall

prescriptive. This shift allows architects greater flexibility, provided that safety, functionality, and environmental performance objectives are met.

For architectural firms, this has opened up more room for design innovation, but it also demands a higher level of technical understanding and coordination. Adaptive reuse projects today require closer collaboration with engineers, consultants, and authorities from early stages to ensure compliance without diluting design intent.

Q: How do you anticipate local conservation laws changing in the future, and how will they influence Singapore's older buildings?

A: We expect conservation and refurbishment regulations

City Square Mall

City Square Mall


City Square Mall


City Square Mall

to increasingly incorporate sustainability metrics, such as embodied carbon, lifecycle performance, and operational efficiency. Rather than focusing solely on physical preservation, future frameworks may place greater emphasis on environmental responsibility and longevity.

This will likely encourage more building owners to consider refurbishment as a viable alternative to demolition, particularly in land-scarce cities like Singapore.

Q: Considering the current fast-paced climate of Singapore's skyline, how can adaptive reuse and conservation fit into Singapore's modernization while upholding past legacies?

A: Adaptive reuse allows cities to evolve without erasing their architectural and social layers. In Singapore's fast-changing skyline, refurbishment provides continuity; it allows older buildings to be upgraded to contemporary standards while retaining their identity.

Rather than viewing conservation and modernisation as opposing forces, adaptive reuse demonstrates how both can coexist. It supports urban sustainability by reducing waste and carbon impact, while contributing to a richer and more layered cityscape.

Q: Future-proofing is a major part of building refurbishment. How does TA.LE tackle upgrading old infrastructure without compromising on historical identity? What are the challenges, and how can they be overcome?

A: Future-proofing begins with understanding what defines a building's character, which is usually the structure, materiality, and spatial logic. At the Hong Leong Building, this meant retaining the granite façade and structural framework while upgrading building services, common spaces, and circulation.

The challenge lies in integrating new systems, such as mechanical, electrical, and fire safety upgrades, into the existing fabric without visual or spatial disruption. This can be overcome through early coordination, precise detailing, and a design approach that respects the original architecture rather than overwriting it.


City Square Mall


City Square Mall


City Square Mall

What are the economic and environmental benefits of refurbishment over rebuilding? Please tell us how these positives enable Singapore's Green Plan 2030.

A: Environmentally, refurbishment significantly reduces embodied carbon by retaining existing structures and materials. Economically, it can allow buildings to remain operational during construction, preserving rental income and reducing downtime.

Structural works typically account for 20–30% of the cost of a new building, so retaining them results in meaningful savings. More importantly, refurbishment aligns with the objectives of Singapore's Green Plan 2030 by reducing construction waste, lowering carbon emissions, and promoting the long-term stewardship of existing assets.

The Digital Pulse of Smart Cities: How Real-time Data Fuels Urban Transformation by Sumeet Puri

Sumeet Puri, Chief Technology Solutions Officer, Solace

Rising populations and rapid urbanisation can be a double-edged sword. How can Southeast Asian cities capitalise on the opportunities presented by a growing population while managing their limited infrastructure?

Southeast Asia Building invited Sumeet Puri, Solace's chief technology solutions officer, to speak to us about harnessing real-time data to unlock AI's full potential and transform urban living. His expertise lies in architecting large-scale enterprise systems in various domains—including trading platforms, core banking, telecommunications, supply chain, machine-to-machine track and trace, and more. He authored the popular Architect's Guide to Event-Driven Architecture, and recently, has expanded into spaces related to big data, mobility, IoT, and analytics.

By 2030, Southeast Asia (SEA)'s cities will welcome an estimated 90 million new residents.[1] While this rapid urbanisation is a phenomenal engine of economic growth, the breakneck pace is creating critical urban pressures such as strained infrastructure, worsening congestion, and increasing demands on public safety.

Without change, these cities risk becoming victims of their own success.

The good news is: these pressures present an equally powerful opportunity. As we enter the agentic age, where AI is moving beyond analytics to enable autonomous city management— from predictive transport management to coordinated disaster response—AI is the critical new layer of intelligence needed to keep our cities sustainable and competitive.

However, AI, as the brain of the smart city, is only as effective as the data it consumes—requiring not just historical static data, but also real-time data for real-time context. For AI to deliver on its promise of transformation, it cannot operate in isolation.

To thrive, smart cities need a real-time digital backbone that breaks down silos, connects systems, and delivers the live, contextual data streams necessary to make our cities feel alive.

Why data silos are the Achilles' heel of urban AI

Cities are just like living organisms—constantly adjusting, evolving, and reacting.

Yet, smart city initiatives invariably inherit a tangled web of legacy systems, resulting in deeply entrenched data silos that separate critical functions like traffic management, utility grids, and environmental monitoring.

Too often, these systems interact only on request or through slow, manual processes, making it difficult to gain a unified, real-time view of the city. This fragmentation is the Achilles' heel of urban AI.

For AI to be truly effective, whether it's rerouting traffic in congested Bangkok, optimising energy load during a heatwave in Manila, or issuing predictive flood barriers in Jakarta, it requires real-time, contextual information.

The longer it takes for an 'event' (a sensor reading, a transaction, a status change) to travel from its source to the AI model, the faster its value perishes.

[1] *https://knowledgehub.clc.gov.sg/publications-library/catalysing-the-development-of-smart-cities-in-asean*

Photo credit: Pexels

By relying on outdated, batch-processed, or passively requested data, even the most sophisticated AI is reduced to simply reacting to yesterday's problems.

Conversely, where data is integrated and flows freely, transformation follows. Singapore's Smart Nation initiatives illustrate this: AI-driven traffic and public transport—fuelled by high-speed, real-time data exchange—has achieved a 10% reduction[2] in citywide emissions despite an increase in ridership, a result of AI-optimised travel routes and schedules.

With these AI-optimised systems projected to save the city $1 billion annually, the competitive edge is clear: AI empowers a city to be smarter, more efficient, and better equipped to serve its people.

Building the city's digital nervous system

To bridge this critical gap between AI's potential and data's isolation, city leaders must stop viewing their infrastructure as a static database and start seeing it as a living nervous system.

Consider the human body: the brain (AI), with its vast memory and computing power, is only effective because it receives real-time signals from the nervous system. A powerful brain disconnected from its sensory inputs simply cannot function.

Urban AI is no different. Without real-time signals, intelligence becomes irrelevant.

For agentic AI to truly thrive, it requires an architectural foundation that unifies every sensor, system, and service as a constant, real-time source of truth.

This foundation is provided by Event-Driven Architecture (EDA),[3] helping businesses to overcome integration hurdles and unlock AI's full potential.

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[2] *https://www.earthday.org/smart-cities-green-futures-how-ai-is-powering-urban-sustainability/*

[3] *https://solace.com/solutions/initiative/event-driven-architecture/?utm_source=pr&utm_medium=prreferral&utm_campaign=pr_fy26_smart_cities_byline&utm_content=real_time_data_urban_transformation*

- The first layer: At the core of EDA is an "Event Mesh",[4] which acts as the city's digital nervous system. This dynamic layer instantly routes 'events'—whether a sensor reading, system alert, or citizen report—to any relevant system or AI agent that needs to react.

- The other half: Layered on top is the "Agent Mesh", [5] a distributed layer of intelligence to the enterprise nervous system. These agents operate autonomously or in tandem with human input, using shared context to automate workflows, detect anomalies, and maintain real-time situational awareness.

Consider a citizen reporting a roadside accident or broken infrastructure. The Event Mesh instantly routes this 'event' to specialised AI agents. An accident-handling agent can immediately access the situation and autonomously dispatch an ambulance, fire truck, and police car as needed. If the analysis is ambiguous, the agent can instantly route the case to a human officer for review. This event-triggered workflow enables the agent to quickly triage and initiate complex, life-saving workflows.

Together, the Event Mesh and Agent Mesh form the dual engine powering resilient, scalable, and AI-ready urban operations.

We see the power of this architecture already transforming cities across Vietnam, where ETC and EPAY leverage this real-time data backbone to enhance vehicle recognition for Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), reducing congestion, improving transparency, and optimising operational costs for a smarter city.

Smart Cities for Everyday Living

As SEA continues to invest heavily in smart city infrastructure, the synergy between AI, sustainability, and urban development offers a pathway to greener, more resilient cities.

Cities never stop evolving and reinventing themselves, and smart urban solutions will only accelerate the pace of change. The competitive edge lies in the seamless pairing of AI with a real-time data foundation. By embracing this approach, SEA cities have the opportunity to leapfrog traditional infrastructure limitations, turning complexity into capability.

With seamless, real-time data, urban planners can anticipate challenges before they arise, respond faster to emergencies, and design city services that are both citizen-centric and environmentally sustainable.

This way, smart cities can evolve beyond being engines of growth, becoming living, adaptive ecosystems that improve the quality of life while setting a global benchmark for innovation and resilience.

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[4] https://solace.com/solutions/initiative/event-mesh/?utm_source=pr&utm_medium=prreferral&utm_campaign=pr_fy26_smart_cities_byline&utm_content=real_time_data_urban_transformation

[5] https://solace.com/products/agent-mesh/?utm_source=pr&utm_medium=prreferral&utm_campaign=pr_fy26_smart_cities_byline&utm_content=real_time_data_urban_transformation

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Jin Yin Memorial

Project Name: Jin Yin Memorial

Project Location: 15 Lor 21A Geylang, Singapore 388432

Completion Time: July 2024–January 2025

Design Team: February Interiors Design and Project Team

Photography: February Interiors Photography Team

Representing the Taoist cosmological triad—Sky (天), Earth (地), and People (人)—through a carefully orchestrated spatial narrative, Jin Yin Memorial's interior design seamlessly integrates refined contemporary design with spiritual symbolism. The project, helmed by February Interiors, employs bold design elements such as round LED skylights, geometric floor planning, and extensive rose-gold metallic finishes to create a serene yet visually striking environment.

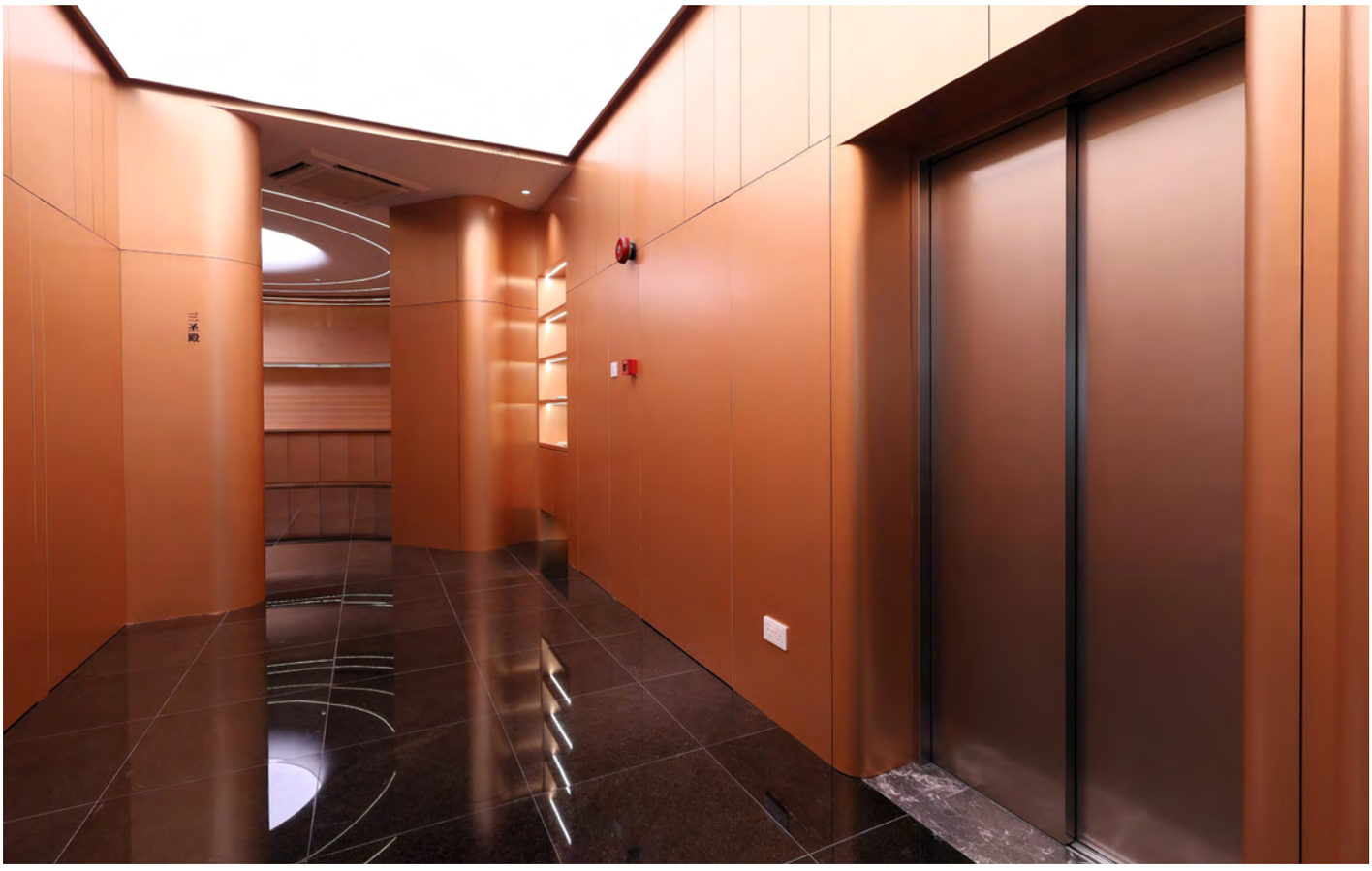
The February Interiors design and project team worked closely with the temple committee and key client representatives to ensure every detail aligned with both functional needs and Taoist philosophy. After the project started in July 2024, the February Interiors team and the client jointly visited China's largest Buddhist and Taoist cultural exhibition in Xiamen

in October 2024. The team studied and fully absorbed traditional craftsmanship, sacred spatial symbolism, lighting concepts, and material applications—all to ensure the final design truly reflected the project's spiritual essence.

With this shared vision and strong collaboration, the project was completed on time in January 2025, meeting the client's expectations with harmony, sensitivity, and contemporary clarity.

The interior is split into three sections—the Main Hall, Lift Lobby, and Tea House. The Main Hall, representing the Sky, is the heart of the temple, illuminated by a large circular LED skylight that spans the ceiling, symbolising the boundless nature of the sky. Deeply embedded in Taoist cosmology, the round form evokes continuity, perfection, and the divine. Calmness washes over visitors with the soft, diffused glow, guiding them to a state of inward reflection. The walls, finished in a modern rose-gold metallic sheen, are a contemporary interpretation of sacred radiance. Their reflective surface captures natural and artificial light, illuminating the room with a gentle shifting radiance throughout the day, embodying the ever-changing heavens.

Representing the Earth, the lift lobby grounds the temple through a square landing area—a shape associated

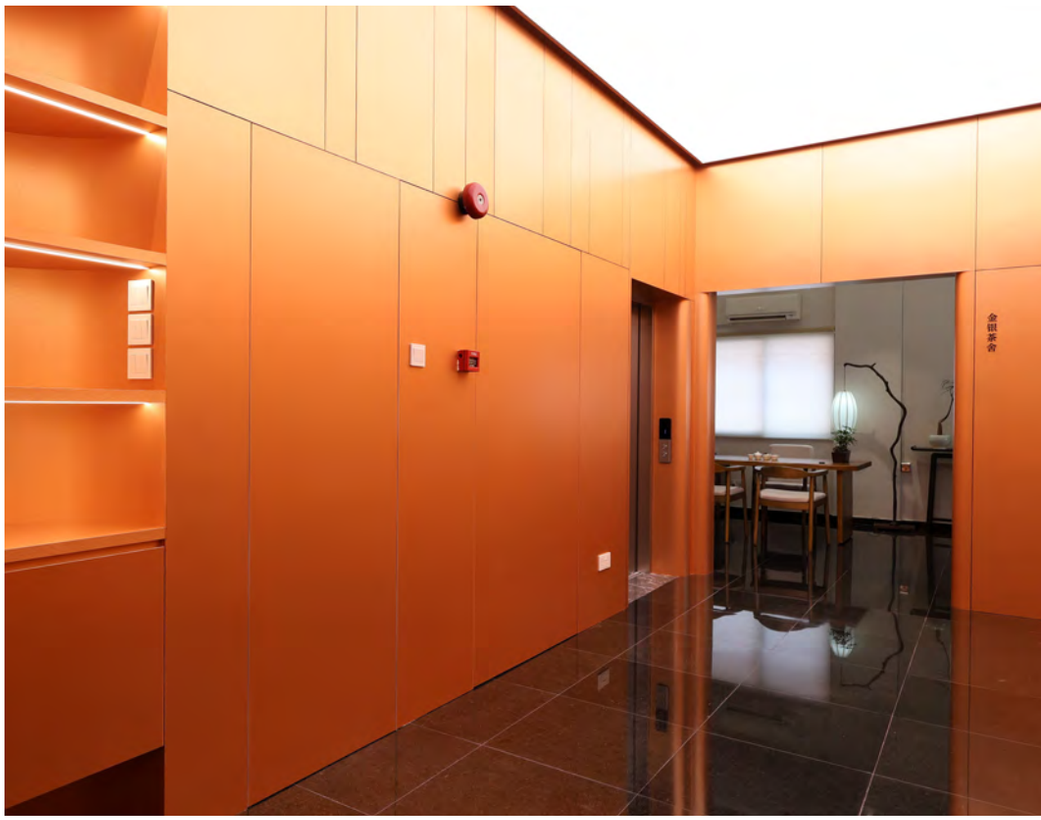



金银茶舍

with stability, order, and structure. The robust form contrasts with the circular skylight of the main hall, yet simultaneously embodies the Taoist balance of heaven above and earth below. The lobby also received a newly modernised lift, designed with rose-gold metallic panels, brushed textures, and subtle lighting details. The new lift, a key practical enhancement, elevates the user experience while reinforcing the project's design language. The combination of earthy spatial proportions and modern finishes creates a welcoming transition zone that prepares visitors for the spiritual spaces ahead.

The People are reflected in the Tea House, completing the Taoist triad. Designed as a space for gathering, sharing tea, and cultivating presence, the tea house embraces warmth, comfort, and connection. The welcoming, human-centred atmosphere is created through natural timber textures, soft ambient lighting, and the project's signature rose-gold accents. Shifting from heavenly and earthly symbolism, the design embodies the lived experience of people, mirroring the Taoist belief that humans serve as a bridge between the sky and earth. The layout fosters conversation and quiet mindfulness, underscoring the importance of human relationships in the spiritual journey.

Throughout the temple, rose-gold metallic finishes are intentionally



used to contrast with its traditional architectural language. The warm glow of the metal brings modern elegance, while its reflective qualities echo the spiritual symbolism of light and energy. This interplay between tradition and contemporary brings timelessness to the temple, creating a forward-looking environment.

In recognition of the team's sensitive approach and design, the project was recognised in the Singapore Interior Design Award (SIDA) under Best in Public Space Design — Honourable Mention. The new Jin Yin Memorial delivers a cohesive spatial experience rooted in Taoist philosophy while embracing modern design, craftsmanship, and technology. This is a temple where Sky, Earth, and People meet in balanced harmony—reimagined for 2025 and beyond.

Yunma

Project Name: Yunma

Project Location: 7 Purvis Street

Completion Time: July 2025–November 2025

Design Team: February Interiors Design and Project Team

Project Lead: Henry Gu

Photography: February Interiors Photography Team

A conservation shophouse along Purvis Street has recently been transformed from a long-standing restaurant into a modern, minimalist café with a soft, warm brand identity. As a turnkey design-and-build project, the revitalisation of [CAFÉ NAME] was handled by February Interiors at every stage. Led personally by project director Henry Gu, he ensured the close coordination between design vision, technical execution, and heritage compliance. The result is a cohesive, refreshed spatial experience that deeply respects the building's heritage.

Embracing a light, warm, and curved design language, the new café reflects the brand's soft and calm philosophy. Specific materials were carefully selected to reinforce this identity; from large-format cement-finish tiles that create a seamless foundation, limewash wall finishes that

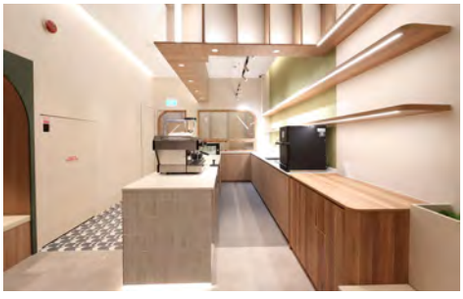
produce a naturally sun-washed look, to custom furniture and carpentry that feature rounded edges and arcs, the atmosphere is intentionally minimalist yet inviting. Every curve contributes to a sense of comfort and gentle movement throughout the café, balancing clean geometry with tactile warmth.

As the shophouse is a URA-conserved building, the renovation posed unique challenges. The original façade had to be fully retained and protected, requiring careful coordination with specialists and strict adherence to guidelines. All works near the storefront required sensitive handling to ensure structural integrity and heritage aesthetics were preserved.

A significant technical challenge came from the rainwater channel that runs directly beneath the central dining area, flowing from the building's interior towards the main road—a characteristic of traditional shophouse drainage systems. To meet both functional and regulatory needs, the design incorporated discreet access panels and removable floor sections, allowing for future maintenance without disrupting the café's operations or aesthetics. This solution maintained the clean, modern look while acknowledging the building's historic infrastructure.

A key feature is the duo lounge area, crafted beneath the existing staircase. The design team transformed the seemingly leftover space into a cozy, intimate seating nook, framed by a large architectural arc. This sweeping curved form draws the eye and adds sculptural interest to the interior, reinforcing the café's identity while improving spatial efficiency. Soft lighting, layered materials, and plush seating complete the lounge, making it a popular spot for guests seeking comfort and privacy. The design successfully turns a challenging corner into a signature Instagram-worthy moment.

The Purvis Street café project is a perfect example of how modern design can flourish within historic constraints. Within the tight timeline, February Interiors delivered a contemporary yet sensitive transformation that reflects strong project management and a deep respect for the building's conservation. By blending curved minimalism, warm materials, and thoughtful spatial solutions, the space underwent a contemporary yet sensitive transformation—one that honours the conservation shophouse's heritage while introducing a refreshing new identity for the brand.



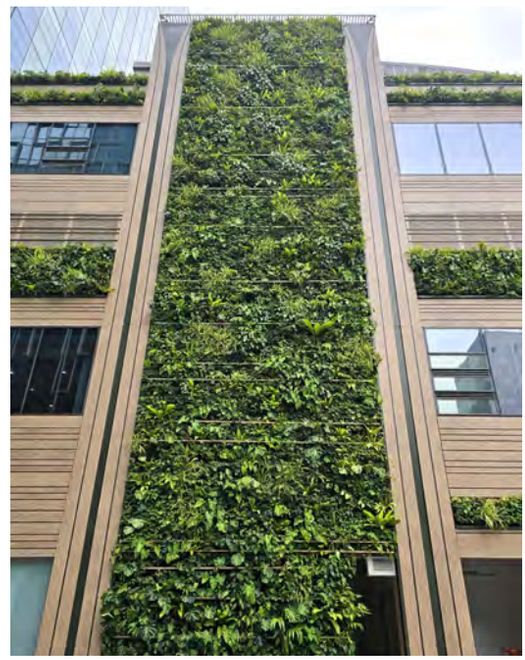
Sherlock – Living Green Wall Installations

Striking, captivating, and experiential—the Sherlock project consists of two living green wall installations designed to immerse guests with a strong visual welcome. One installation is located within the reception and drop-off area, while the second is integrated into the exterior facade of the building. From the moment visitors arrive, greenery sets the tone and cohesively transitions from the exterior to the interior.

For this project, the designers incorporated living greenery as a welcoming feature, ensuring both long-term visual appeal and functionality. The selection includes a curated mix of rare plant species that are well-suited to the site conditions and able to thrive with minimal maintenance.

Considering the high visibility of both installations, maintaining a consistently lush and well-kept appearance was a key requirement. To achieve this, the living green walls are supported by an efficient system that ensures the health and longevity of the plants, enabling vibrant greenery and reducing the need for intensive manual maintenance.

Going beyond the aesthetic benefits, the green walls also serve functional purposes. The installation helps cool the surrounding area and improves acoustic comfort. With



the cleverly incorporated sound absorption panels in the backing system, the green walls reduce noise levels in both the reception and drop-off areas.

The Sherlock project stands out as both visually appealing to visitors and practical in its application. Discreet features and passive cooling elevate guests' arrival, subtly improving the user experience. In light of its achievements, the project was recognised with a Silver Award at the LIAS Awards, acknowledging the quality of the design, execution, and impact of the green wall installations.

PROJECT DETAILS

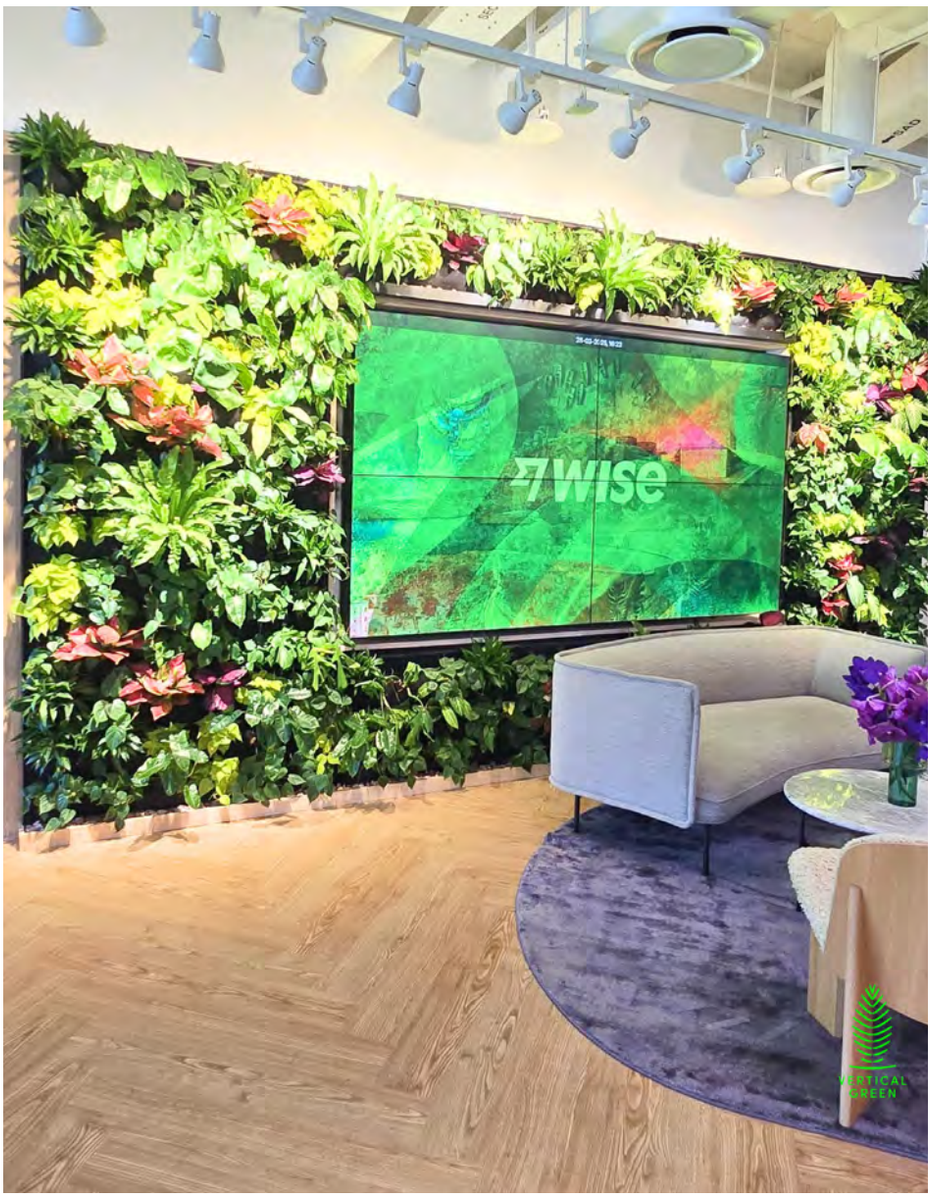
PROJECT NAME: Sherlock
DESIGN FIRM: Vertical Green
LOCATION: 18 Cross Street, Singapore 048423
START DATE: 24 Jan 2025
COMPLETION DATE: 24 Dec 2025
PHOTO CREDIT: Vertical Green Employees

Wise Singapore Office – Live Green Wall Installation

With a focus on integrating live greenery into the reception area, the Wise Singapore Office project creates a welcoming and calming first impression for visitors. Positioned behind the reception desk and waiting area, the live green wall draws attention with its unique array of fauna, arranged naturally around the central LED screen. It is a visual and experiential element that seeks to engage, greeting guests upon their arrival.

The goal was to incorporate biophilic design principles while maintaining a clean, modern aesthetic. By integrating the live green wall seamlessly with the large screen, a balance was achieved between greenery and the digital elements of the space, reflecting how they can coexist without overpowering one another.

From a technical perspective, the green wall was designed to be highly efficient and low-maintenance. The system is fully automated, featuring:



- Automated irrigation and watering systems
- Automated fertilisation
- Automated lighting
- A soilless growing medium

The soilless system enables the live green wall to sustain healthy plant growth with minimal ongoing maintenance, making it suitable for a high-traffic corporate environment such as the Wise office.

Through the introduction of live greenery in the workspace, the atmosphere is elevated, becoming more pleasant and calming for employees and visitors alike. It stands as a testament to modern living integrated with nature, supporting workplace well-being while aligning with Wise's modern brand

identity. Breaking free from traditional workspace design, the project's biophilic element grounds visitors in a more holistic experience.

This project was also featured in Wise's publications during the grand opening of the Singapore office, highlighting the green wall as a key design feature of the new space.

PROJECT DETAILS

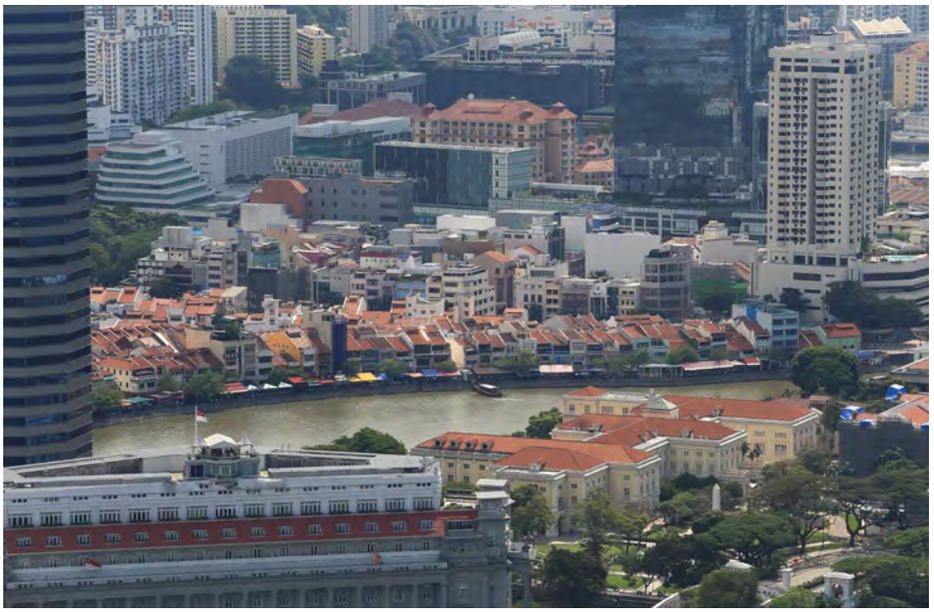
PROJECT NAME: Wise Singapore Office
DESIGN FIRM: Vertical Green
LOCATION: 2 Tanjong Katong Rd., PLQ 3, S437161
START DATE: 24 Jan 2025
COMPLETION: 10 March 2025
PHOTO CREDIT: Vertical Green Employees

New Life to Cultural Icons: The Case for Retrofitting in Southeast Asia

The buildings in the skyline are an integral part of a city's identity. Often, foreigners are able to identify specific locations based on certain architectural landmarks. However, the lifespan of buildings is a point of concern for both owners and community members alike. In the case of Singapore, demolishing and rebuilding is a common practice, sometimes enacted only after 10–15 years.[1]

This is an issue on multiple fronts—economic, sustainability, and cultural. One way to tackle it is through retrofitting. There are a couple of considerations for owners to think over before choosing this option: cost and sustainability. Rarely, retrofitting may not be the most cost-effective and/or sustainable option. For the latter, the embodied carbon of a building must be considered. By viewing the entire life cycle of a building, owners can determine if an old building would benefit positively from retrofitting, or if it is greener to build a new structure with sustainability as a core value from the outset.[2]

Retrofitting is important as a means to reduce operational costs, improve carbon emissions, and preserve a building's significance to a city's culture. In this issue of Southeast Asia Building, we will explore retrofitting as an option for owners who wish to upkeep their buildings for future generations.



Sujin jetkasettakorn

Government Policies & Recommendations

Starting in the end of 2024, the Mandatory Energy Improvement (MEI) regime was introduced to "support Singapore's move towards a low-carbon built environment".[3] Applying to energy-intensive buildings of 5,000 m^2 or more, subject building owners are required to be audited, and thereafter implement energy-saving measures to comply with the Building and Construction Authority's (BCA) regulatory acts.

"Through the MEI regime, building owners can expect to generate cost savings from the reduction in energy use. This will also reduce the overall environmental impact of building operations," said BCA.[4]

Likewise, the BCA published the "Existing Building Retrofit" in 2010, a six-step guide on approaching the retrofitting process:

1. Determine Your Baseline
2. Review Your Maintenance, Purchasing, and Energy Procurement
3. Establish Your Targets and Goals
4. Crunch Time: Refurbish or Demolish?
5. Select Your Optimal Upgrade Initiatives
6. Make It Happen

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[1] *Building and Construction Authority, Singapore, "Existing Building Retrofit" (Building and Construction Authority, Singapore, 2010), https://www1.bca.gov.sg/docs/default-source/docs-corp-news-and-publications/publications/for-industry/existingbldgretrofit.pdf, 6.*

[2] *Bryan Kow, "Retrofitting Not Always Best for Older Buildings to Meet New Energy Standards," Business Times, June 19, 2023, https://www.businesstimes.com.sg/property/retrofitting-not-always-best-older-buildings-meet-new-energy-standardsat.*

[3] *Building and Construction Authority, Singapore, "Mandatory Energy Improvement (MEI) Regime," Building and Construction Authority, Singapore, 2024, https://www1.bca.gov.sg/buildsg/sustainability/regulatory-requirements-for-existing-buildings/mandatory-energy-improvement-regime.*

[4] *Bryan Kow, "Retrofitting Not Always Best for Older Buildings to Meet New Energy Standards," Business Times, June 19, 2023, https://www.businesstimes.com.sg/property/retrofitting-not-always-best-older-buildings-meet-new-energy-standards.*

Although presented as a necessary step towards Singapore's Green Plan 2030, the guide also highlights the cost-effectiveness of retrofitting; by switching to energy- and resource-saving solutions, operational costs can be lowered for both management and users.[5]

Two key aspects to consider are the current performance of a building and its compliance with current code and regulatory requirements.[6]

Current Performance Factors	Energy
	Water
	Waste
	Condition Audit
	Indoor Environmental Quality
	Occupation Satisfaction
	Facilities Management
Current Code & Regulatory Requirements	Fire Safety & Egress
	Accessibility
	Availability of Gross Floor Area

Tananuphong Kummaru

It is recommended that you consult the following experts for advice and help in determining the baseline for a building: Facility Manager, Sustainability Consultant, Engineering Consultant, Architect, Energy Manager, Energy Service Company (ESCO), Services, Structural & Façade Contractor. Afterwards, building owners can set their goals based on the results of their findings.

Particularities in Southeast Asia

Not all countries experience the same conditions that will affect the retrofitting process. In Southeast Asia, "carbon emissions from buildings account for an even higher proportion of total emissions, at 38%." This is due to the particular climate in Southeast Asia: high air temperatures and relative humidity, rainy and dry seasons, and intense solar radiation. These all result in the accelerated degradation of traditional building materials. Structural integrity is further compromised due to the humidity and heat, which are prime for mould growth and termites, amongst other biological factors.[7]

In the midst of these aforementioned points, energy consumption in the construction industry is projected to increase significantly without countermeasures, while 60% of the region's 15,000 protected heritage buildings face issues of low energy efficiency.[8] How, then, can heritage buildings balance the need for upgrades without compromising cultural identity?

Unfortunately, there is a noticeable gap in the research of this field. A lack of systematic methodology and interdisciplinary research has resulted in the absence of "a unified framework to guide the sustainable adaptation of heritage buildings while ensuring the protection of cultural and environmental values."[9] The research that has

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[5]Building and Construction Authority, Singapore, "Existing Building Retrofit" (Building and Construction Authority, Singapore, 2010), https://www1.bca.gov.sg/docs/default-source/docs-corp-news-and-publications/publications/for-industry/existingbldgretrofit.pdf, 9.

[6]Building and Construction Authority, Singapore, "Existing Building Retrofit" (Building and Construction Authority, Singapore, 2010), https://www1.bca.gov.sg/docs/default-source/docs-corp-news-and-publications/publications/for-industry/existingbldgretrofit.pdf, 12–15.

[7]Zhenyu Xiao et al., "Sustainable Adaptation of Heritage Buildings in Tropical Rainforest Climates: The Innovative Practice of Tanjong Pagar Railway Station in Singapore," Energy and Buildings 335, no. 115560 (March 4, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enbuild.2025.115560, 1.

[8]Zhenyu Xiao et al., "Sustainable Adaptation of Heritage Buildings in Tropical Rainforest Climates: The Innovative Practice of Tanjong Pagar Railway Station in Singapore," Energy and Buildings 335, no. 115560 (March 4, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enbuild.2025.115560, 2.

Niramon Boonthap

been conducted, however, has shown that the application of RES technologies, especially photovoltaic (PV) systems, has massive potential for reducing energy consumption in historic buildings without intruding on their iconic designs. This is on a case-by-case basis, calibrated specifically for local conditions, and is determined by how much intervention a cultural structure requires.

To that end, historic building owners must be prepared to pay an initial cost for long-term gain. In integrating renewable energy systems while preserving its architectural character, customised renewable energy strategies must be developed to "maintain the structure's unique aesthetic qualities during clean energy transformation" without compromising on structural integrity.[10]

Using Tanjong Pagar Railway Station as an example, the PV system plan had minimal intervention, high reversibility, low visual impact, and optimised energy efficiency. [11] The study showed that, over a 25-year operational time, the PV system would maintain substantial energy production, even during its decline.[12] It must be noted here that this particular retrofit plan requires little intervention due to its preexisting climate-adaptive design and overall good condition. Nonetheless, it serves as a model for other historic retrofits to aspire to.

A key finding from a 2025 study highlighted the potential for adaptive reuse projects to serve as educational tools for public engagement in sustainability and cultural preservation. In turn, such projects could potentially influence policy and practice in urban development and heritage management.[13] The paper emphasises not just the community's role in cultural preservation, but also local authorities' as well. The legal process of retrofitting and adaptive reuse should be streamlined, and conservation boards should revise their guidelines to address the unique climate of Southeast Asia that affects preservation and refurbishment while maintaining historical integrity.[14]

Conclusion

Retrofitting is an excellent way to maintain the longevity of a building. The pros more often than not outweigh the cons, cutting costs and moving cities towards a greener urban environment. In Southeast Asia, we face unique circumstances and have to adapt our retrofitting and refurbishment requirements to the specific climate. For historic buildings, this is an additional challenge; preservation becomes more than just a resource-saving measure, becoming an important touchstone of society. Through this discussion, Southeast Asia Building hopes to enlighten readers about the problems faced in retrofitting and how these challenges can be overcome through community effort and guided legislation.

RENDI SYAHRUL ZARKONI

[9] *Zhenyu Xiao et al., "Sustainable Adaptation of Heritage Buildings in Tropical Rainforest Climates: The Innovative Practice of Tanjong Pagar Railway Station in Singapore," Energy and Buildings 335, no. 115560 (March 4, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enbuild.2025.115560, 3.*

[10] *Zhenyu Xiao et al., "Sustainable Adaptation of Heritage Buildings in Tropical Rainforest Climates: The Innovative Practice of Tanjong Pagar Railway Station in Singapore," Energy and Buildings 335, no. 115560 (March 4, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enbuild.2025.115560, 5.*

[11] *Zhenyu Xiao et al., "Sustainable Adaptation of Heritage Buildings in Tropical Rainforest Climates: The Innovative Practice of Tanjong Pagar Railway Station in Singapore," Energy and Buildings 335, no. 115560 (March 4, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enbuild.2025.115560, 16.*

[12] *Zhenyu Xiao et al., "Sustainable Adaptation of Heritage Buildings in Tropical Rainforest Climates: The Innovative Practice of Tanjong Pagar Railway Station in Singapore," Energy and Buildings 335, no. 115560 (March 4, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enbuild.2025.115560, 19.*

[13] *Zhenyu Xiao et al., "Sustainable Adaptation of Heritage Buildings in Tropical Rainforest Climates: The Innovative Practice of Tanjong Pagar Railway Station in Singapore," Energy and Buildings 335, no. 115560 (March 4, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enbuild.2025.115560, 21.*

[14] *Zhenyu Xiao et al., "Sustainable Adaptation of Heritage Buildings in Tropical Rainforest Climates: The Innovative Practice of Tanjong Pagar Railway Station in Singapore," Energy and Buildings 335, no. 115560 (March 4, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enbuild.2025.115560, 22.*

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Expo Real Asia Pacific 2026	15 – 17 June 2026	Singapore	Singapore	www.exporealasiapacific.com	1
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