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Design at Work...
New Office Interiors

AEDAS INTERIORS

AIG Head Office, Hong Kong



Upon commissioning SOM and Aedas to design its new tower in Hong Kong, AIG also asked Aedas Interiors to plan and design its Asian head office within. The Group's two new major construction projects were implemented concurrently, with AIG Global Investment Group Director Malcolm YS Lai overseeing them. Lai was the other force in the steering committee of two persons that included AIG Chairman Edmund Tse's daughter, Ada Tse, who guided the selection of corporate art.

AIG's 80,000sq ft head office comprises six floors plus half of another, with the top two levels reserved for executive offices and meeting rooms. Aedas Interiors Project Director Logan MacWatt oversaw the interior design, and moved over 500 people into the space through two phases in September and October 2005. "Since many of the departments were independently located prior to moving into AIG Tower, we did not have to be concerned about too many adjacency requirements," recalls MacWatt.

Aedas Interiors reduced eight different workstation sizes to one simple, standard 1.8 by 1.8m module. Senior staff members were allocated a double-size workstation, providing a great deal of flexibility for internal relocation. "We used low panels throughout for the space to be as open as possible, and planned very generically so it's easier for departments to grow or shrink," notes MacWatt. "We avoided built-in furniture in the private office for the same reason." Instead of drywall, demountable Permasteelisa partitions were specified for the private offices, imparting a clean, contemporary look that also provides a high level of acoustic privacy.

Flanking either side of the 16th floor reception and waiting area are a total of 14 meeting rooms that seat up to 14 people each. Meanwhile, the boardroom, meeting rooms, press rooms and dining rooms on the 33rd floor are monitored by full-time security personnel positioned to have a full view of the staircase between the 33rd and 35th floors (floors with the number four were omitted in accordance with the negative connotations of the word in Chinese culture). "Our initial concept was to have a maitre d' instead of a receptionist," explains MacWatt. "Guests would be greeted as if they were in a restaurant and shown to a meeting room. Privacy for each person was very important – AIG didn't want a large waiting area."



At the very outset, Aedas Interiors set aside over 1,000sq ft for a commercial kitchen on the 33rd floor to cater for the many social functions AIG hosts. The dining rooms rival the best restaurants in Hong Kong, with leather-bound menus, a dedicated food and beverage manager, wait staff and special dishes appealing to both Western and Asian palates. Four of the rooms can be adjoined into one large banquet hall, and there is a lounge area equipped with a built-in bar for cocktail functions. Light switches are concealed behind integrated panels for a flawless aesthetic. "AIG is very keen on providing hospitality," says MacWatt. "Here, the food is excellent and the facilities are fully booked."

The public areas feature extensive use of wood and glass, including an abstract vertical wood pattern suspended in front of full-height glazing. Reiterating a light trough designed by SOM into the building's perimeter, the interior designers extended this line into the office, designating it as the level for clerestory fenestration. Sandwiched between private offices, in the walls of back-of-house storage areas, the clerestory allows natural light to penetrate deep into the premises. As the building bows outward and tapers inward toward the top, floor plates are increasingly smaller on the higher levels. Aedas Interiors used a compactus filing area along the core wall as a buffer, reducing it where there was less space and blocking it from the rest of the office with drywall partitions. In addition, a large pantry on each floor is equipped with a full kitchen to act as both a dining room and an informal meeting area.

