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Hankook Tire R+D Centre, Hankook Technodome opens in South Korea

The new research and development centre for Hankook Tire was unveiled in Daejeon on Tuesday, 18 October. The new facility forms an integral part of Hankook Tire's new vision for a corporate culture and brand, and the 96,328-square-metre R+D centre aims to attract the industry's top talent, providing an inspirational place to work, with light filled offices, advanced laboratories and dynamic social spaces to nurture a culture of openness and innovation.

Located in the heart of Asia's 'Silicon Valley', the building is an expression of Hankook Tire's commitment to technology, quality and rigorous research. It lays emphasis on communication within the workplace, with central meeting pods for spontaneous team meetings. The centrepiece of the state-of-the-art facility are the tyre testing and research laboratories, on display to invited visitors and staff.

The architectural vision was to create a sleek, contemporary and mysterious building with a floating silver roof. Analysis of their existing facilities provided an insight into the testing spaces, which ranged in their requirements from isolation pits to double-height spaces to accommodate specialist equipment. The building's section was key to resolving this complex spatial puzzle. The building has a dynamic, integrated plan that promotes visual connections between different areas, and the arrangement is highly flexible to enable future changes in use. In profile, the levels step up from four to six storeys, in response to the height restriction imposed by an adjacent government site.

The research spaces extend along a top-lit central spine that runs from the restaurant and entrance in the south to the staff accommodation to the north. Glazed oval meeting pods are suspended within the full-height space, which acts as a light well, drawing daylight through the building. The circulation strategy creates a natural divide between public areas and more sensitive product development zones. A spectacular lobby functions as an exhibition space for the latest product range, with views into the testing areas and the parkland outside.

The centre has attained a LEED 'Gold' rating, and integrates a number of sustainable design strategies. Waste heat from the research and development centre is used to heat the adjacent dormitory building, which accommodates visitors and staff, and a lake at the southern entrance to the site harvests rainwater for use in cooling.

David Nelson, Co-Head of Design, Foster + Partners:

"When Hankook Tire first came to us, they wanted their new R+D centre to reflect their company values, the quest for quality and belief in rigorous testing. The aesthetic and the brief were both borne from this ambition, and the result is a building that supports innovation while also creating a strong sense of identity."

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Nigel Dancey, Head of Studio, Foster + Partners:

“The design of the new R+D centre for Hankook Tire responds to the organisation’s specific way of working and their commitment to cutting-edge technology and research. It encapsulates a diverse range of spaces from highly controlled laboratory environments to flexible meeting pods that promote collaboration, all contained within a simple, emblematic form.”

Iwan Jones, Partner, Foster + Partners:

“The key design objectives for the Hankook Technodome were two-fold – to reinvent the Hankook Tire’s image and to create an integrated working environment for the office and laboratory staff. The spatial arrangement encourages visual connectivity and physical interaction. Testing facilities are on display and circulation and meeting spaces are shared to enhance interaction.”

Huasop Lee, Project Architect, Foster + Partners:

“The challenge was to match both client aspirations and the exacting requirements of a state-of-the-art R+D facility, which was only made possible by the close collaboration between the design and construction teams involved. Beyond the simple form, is a flexible, integrated workplace that will hopefully evoke a sense of unity and pride among the staff at Hankook Tire.”

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