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1. Architectural concept

Creating a building with a distinct identity was the primary aim for the project. This decision was underlined by the need to mediate between two distinctly different urban conditions: Whilst the historic neighbourhood features a small-scale architectural hierarchy with an inherent urban quality, the masterplan is clearly inspired by visions of the early modern movement, where solitary buildings define urbanity by forming a city of objects. Buildings of this scale have a public responsibility that needs to be addressed by offering a public destination beyond formal appearance, a “place to be” where the dynamics of urban life can be enjoyed by all citizens of Seoul. The desire for connectivity – free communication, open interaction, and dynamic coexistence, both internally and with the outside world - arises from a profound humanistic corporate ethos that reaches far beyond the responsibilities of a headquarters. This philosophy manifests itself in an architectural concept that is dedicated to the integral approach of “form follows purpose”.

Open to all sides, the ground level leads straight into the heart of the building. The atrium is not only the central arrival zone, but also the main event space for art installations, concerts, lectures and other cultural activities – all framed by a variety of public facilities such as a museum, a library, a tea room and retail. On the upper atrium levels, the corporate presence is more perceptible. The main attraction here is the auditorium, an amphitheatre facing the park that can be adjusted in size, acoustic performance and ambience by deploying large curtains. Other functions on this floor include the AP daycare centre, the test customer area, public restaurants and a large conference centre. The courtyard level above the atrium is the social and atmospheric hub of the company's workplace, providing various corporate amenities such as staff restaurants, cafés, fitness and health facilities. The upper floors are primarily devoted to office use. Vertical circulation is arranged in a decentralised fashion via four cores, providing high user flexibility for various layout options. The roof gardens, vital for recreational well-being, are visible from all floors. As panoramic openings, they merge the functional horizontal layering from public to private with the overall concept of connectivity.

The materiality also reflects the integral design approach that is driven by a quest for authenticity, transparency, meaning and clarity. To achieve this, the palette has been reduced to materials of high quality that are enduring and age with character. In the large-scale public areas such as the atrium, exposed concrete and large stone slabs convey the robust and tectonic nature of the building and its generous spatial structure – a deliberate, conceptual decision against additional finishes. In the more private, intimate zones, such as offices, the materials are finer with a rich colour palette.

Especially during the hot and humid summer months, the city of Seoul offers an abundance of natural green, stretching from public landscaping to planted roofs. Organic landscape elements extend the adjacent parkland, forming protected niches where trees provide shelter from sun and wind. A geometric stone plinth marks the building footprint and resolves the topography. Nature permeates the building right up to the roof gardens, where large trees express their sculptural quality complemented by amorphous water basins.

2. Sustainability

The Amorepacific headquarters building represents a broad and holistic approach towards sustainability. This involves all architectural, structural and technical concepts, which have driven the design in many ways. Inspired by local expertise that has been developed over centuries, the design connects traditional typologies in a contemporary manner. The orientation to the sun, the informed exploitation of local climate conditions and the utilisation of regional resources and craftsmanship connects architecture with its place and man with nature. The built environment negotiates between protection and view, private and public. A clear form, echoing this archaic knowledge, generates identity. A contemporary implementation of this approach calls for the development of integrated low-tech-solutions.

Oriented at 45° to the cardinal points, all elevations stand at an angle to the path of the sun, thus reducing heat gains through direct solar radiation. External shading, customised precisely to seasonal solar exposure, and high performance glazing exploit this advantage to the full. The overall shape and massing of the building has been optimised with an internal courtyard and three large-scale façade openings to provide maximum daylight and views for each floor. The insertion of these openings also generates the natural environment of the roof gardens, which as havens for relaxation enhance the health and general well-being for the people who work here. These architectural decisions form the basis for the sustainability strategies for all technical systems. For example, the resulting shape allows for natural ventilation of all office areas during midseason, and the maximisation of incoming daylight reduces the need for artificial lighting.

In order to reduce energy consumption as much as possible, state of the art technology has been applied for harvesting solar and ground source energy. Energy recovery devices are included in all heating, cooling and ventilation plants. Sub-metering on all electrical distribution monitors energy consumption throughout the building. Lighting control is equipped with daylight and occupancy sensors, reducing electricity consumption. Rainwater harvesting, grey water treatment and low flow water fixtures are provided to reduce potable water usage and wastewater generation.

Due to the successful implementation of these strategies, LEED Gold certification is expected for June 2018. The assessment is based on a number of green design and construction criteria that positively impact the construction process, the well-being of the users and the broader community including:

- Selecting a location in a dense, well-connected urban area;
- Restoring large portions of the previously developed site to a more natural state;
- Responsible use of natural resources;
- Using highly efficient technologies for optimum user comfort.

3. Façade

The façade inherently represents the overall architectural approach. Connecting interior and exterior, it protects and shields as much as it reveals. It balances daylight, solar radiation and views, making a decisive contribution to the quality of the interiors. These considerations define the façade design, which is based on two façade layers working in unison.

The external layer envelops the volume like a lightweight, almost textile curtain, adding depth and playful detail to the external appearance. It consists of matt-white aluminium fins, differing in size and placed at regular intervals across all vertical surfaces as an external shading device, allowing for maximum views. Horizontal walkway constructions with lightweight grating fix the fins to the building. The external façade layer wraps the façade from the perimeter into the façade openings and the courtyard. Size and shape of the fins have been carefully tuned to provide optimal natural lighting and unobstructed views, while reducing unwanted solar radiation and glare for the interiors. The fins therefore have different sizes and are grouped in four different “families” as dictated by the solar exposure for each cardinal direction. In keeping with the low-tech philosophy, the metal curtain does not include any moving parts to allow for low maintenance and reduced abrasion, especially in view of seasonal dust storms. In order to eliminate vibration and wind generated noise, the aerodynamic profile of the fins has been optimised based on a wind tunnel test, which was carried out using a 1:70 scale model of the building and the immediate urban surroundings.

The thermal skin behind the external layer features fixed floor-to-ceiling glazing and opaque ventilation panels. Automatically operable ventilation flaps provide natural ventilation during intermediate seasons on the typical office floors. This improves thermal comfort and energy efficiency in spring and autumn by reducing the reliance on mechanical systems. The thermal capacity is maximised by applying triple glazing with an aluminium frame system that is thermally separated.

4. Lighting

Daylight – vital for our well-being and unique in its atmospheric quality – was an integral component of our concept development from the outset. The glazed floor of the courtyard brings diffuse, natural light into the most important public space of the building, the atrium. The office floors above receive daylight from two sides. The façade fins are arranged vertically in order to allow unobstructed full-height views. Their elliptical profile and light, matt finish enhances diffuse reflection and increases the quality and quantity of daylight entering the interior. Automatic internal blinds with manual override are integrated into the façade mullions to close out glare for short periods of direct sunshine or reflections from neighbouring buildings. However, the design of the fins has been optimised in such way as to keep the deployment of the blinds to a minimum throughout the whole year.

At night, the strong shape of the building is transformed into a glowing lantern. The simplicity of light shining from within brings out the delicate nature of the façade layers by reducing the fins to a silhouette. This strategy also provides an element of control for the external appearance regardless of the interior lighting conditions. For landscape lighting, a subtle approach has been chosen using low level, discreet lighting with minimal upward light pollution.

A family of luminaires has been developed and produced especially for this project in order to address the complex and diverse interior lighting requirements whilst maintaining a coherent design language. The design focused not on the luminaire as an object but on the light itself, aspiring to the highest quality with state of the art LED technology in relation to each spatial and functional context. Inspired by the archetypal light bulb, all luminaires consist of a body with heat sink and driver, an LED-module generating the light and – most importantly – a solid lens modulating the light and hence defining its character. Lenses in various shapes and with different surfaces allow each luminaire type to provide different light distributions for specific spatial and technical requirements such as downlights, wall-washers and object light. Surface mounted, recessed, pendant and pivoting types in various sizes and with different luminous output cover the broad range of applications and atmospheres required for the atrium, public circulation, offices, restaurants and breakout zones, museum and exhibition, auditorium, retail, corporate functions and outdoor spaces. The lens can be easily exchanged and replaced, thus simplifying maintenance and increasing flexibility in application. Compatibility with DALI standards provides flexible control groups. The technology significantly reduces energy consumption while allowing for high luminaire efficacy, high colour rendering index, low colour variation and a long durability of the product.

5. Office interiors

The continuous development of new means to interconnect creativity and knowledge is transforming the way we work. This is an observation that has been confirmed by the company's analysis of internal operational processes. The configuration of the office interior has to provide appropriate space to adapt internal structures, working methods and needs as necessary. Connectivity hence became the leading idea for the interior office design.

In order to provide a highly communicative and flexible working environment, team zones and individual workspaces form an interconnected landscape that facilitates open and informal communication in diverse ways. Internal staircases with associated hubs connect all office floors. The office space provides various opportunities for meeting and working, while the boundaries in between remain fluid. Filled with natural light and impressive views, it invites staff to choose freely where and how to best spend their working day. The result is an innovative working environment that reduces hierarchies in favour of egalitarian and collective structures, echoing the company values by oscillating between tradition and progress, naturalness and artificiality, inner health and outer beauty.

The material palette generates a light and animated yet calm ambience. Wool carpets and a bespoke open metal ceiling provide the general setting for the interior fit-out. Light partitions with translucent glazing are used for meeting rooms and cellular offices. Textiles in rich colours are integrated in offices, meeting rooms and auxiliary spaces, enhancing acoustic performance and adding a soft touch. Wall panels provide a calm background for the display of art. A system of freestanding shelves, desks and chairs offers flexible solutions for working and meeting with varying degrees of privacy and ambience. Collectively, the wall and furniture systems and the material palette form the 'office kit', from which a variety of spatial and atmospheric solutions can be created. A consistent yet playful design idea subtly holds together the diverse activities of daily office routine, serving communal as well as individual needs.

6. Facts and data

Client	Amorepacific Corporation
Address	Hangang-ro 100, Yongsan-gu, Seoul
Amorepacific facilities	Offices including special areas: Staff facilities: gastronomy, fitness, library Daycare centre Company history space Test customer area
Public facilities	Atrium and Exhibition space Amorepacific Museum of Art Amorepacific Museum of Art, library Auditorium Conference centre Gastronomy Tea room Retail including company brands
Lettable space	Tenant offices
Gardens	Pocket park, roof gardens
Height above mean sea level	±0.00 m = 12,80 m
Height	110 m
Site area	14,500 m ²
Footprint	8,700 m ²
Gross floor area	216,000 m ²
Typical floor area	approx. 5,800 m ² above ground, approx. 9,800 m ² below ground
Width x length	90 m x 90 m (ground floor)
Floors	23 above ground (Ground floor plus 22 floors), 7 below ground
Max. occupancy	approx. 7000 staff plus pedestrian traffic
Auditorium	450 seats
Parking	680 spaces
Sustainability standard	LEED Gold (certification expected for summer 2018)

7. Quotes

“The building suggests generosity of spirit to the people who work here and the citizens. It is more than an office, it is something that mediates between the company and the city. It shows how a company can participate in the larger community.”

David Chipperfield

“The concept of a high-rise courtyard building – offering a silhouette and more importantly a place to be – takes reference from Korea’s rich and versatile architectural heritage. The spatial and social adaptation of this cultural knowledge ensures that the building provides more than a company workplace, but rather a public destination for all, bridging the past with the present and thereby establishing an identity that is rooted in its time, place and history.”

Christoph Felger, Partner and Design director

“Despite of all our international experience, bridging into other cultural areas never ceases to inspire and enhance our work.”

Harald Müller, Partner and Managing director

“In this project from the start we had a holistic approach in mind – the complex particularities of urban and architectural idea, landscaping, engineering solutions and interiors are all informing each other.”

Hans Krause, Associate and Project architect