

Architects

THAPE (Tian Hua Architectural Planning Engineering Limited)

Reviewed by

Nicola Turner

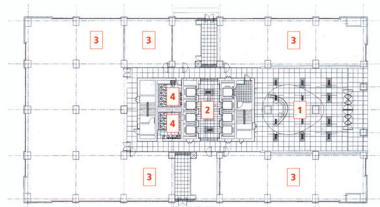
Going it alone

Zao Fong Universe Building, Zhong Shan Xi Lu, Shanghai, PRC

The majority of design work in the PRC is executed by the giant state-run institutes. But the tide is beginning to turn, and there are a handful of architects who are willing to risk setting up independently, while using foreign consultants, and offering an all-in package to rival the service provided by the institutes. One such venture is Highpower Holding Limited owned by Hong Kong-Chinese Jeff Zhao, incorporating the architects THAPE, interior designers TDeco and TMT Trading Development Company. All the key principals hail from Tongji University and have experience of practice in Europe or the USA. A government license was granted to THAPE in August 1997, by which time the exterior of the Zao Fong Universe Building had largely been completed. THAPE has been responsible for the podium and the interior fit out of the tower. China has a very short history of interior design, and the firm has seen this as a market to exploit in the current less stable economy.

The clean undramatic exterior of the tower is complemented by an intelligently detailed interior. On entering the lobby the eye is immediately drawn to the floating ovoid in the ceiling recess, the shape of which is reflected in the marble and granite pattern of the floor. The ovoid is suspended to house the back lighting, forming a firmament of stars representing the theme of the universe. The client was keen to express a 21st century theme within the interior, hence the microchip motif in granite and stainless steel on the walls and floor. The thick granite clad concrete columns are adorned with stainless steel fins. The curved bespoke reception desk in timber provides a contrast to the marble and steel, and is echoed in the panning behind it, which continues up to the first floor, concealing the obligatory fire door.

The steel frame aluminium-clad entrance canopy provides scale



Key to ground floor plan

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. Main lobby | 3. Tenant area |
| 2. Elevator lobby | 4. Restrooms |

to the entrance and its curved shape allows maximum light into the lobby whilst reflecting the other soft lines within the interior. The continuity between interior and exterior is maintained by the continuation of the design on the walls and floor either side of the glass entrance facade. THAPE will complete its second office tower for the same client by the end of this year.

Client

Reventon (Shanghai) Limited

Architect/Structural and MEP engineer

THAPE

Main contractor

Shanghai Zhu An Construction Co Ltd

Architectural collaborators in the schematic phase

Resolution 4: Architecture of New York

1: View from first floor of lobby with marble and granite floor and microchip and ovoid motifs.

2: View of the entrance with the steel frame aluminium-clad canopy

Facing page:

Full view of the lobby showing the "floating" ovoid in the ceiling



