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**MAKING AN
ENTRANCE:**
A new canopy
made up of laser-
cut modules
welcome guests
at the refreshed
Rendezvous Grand
Hotel Singapore

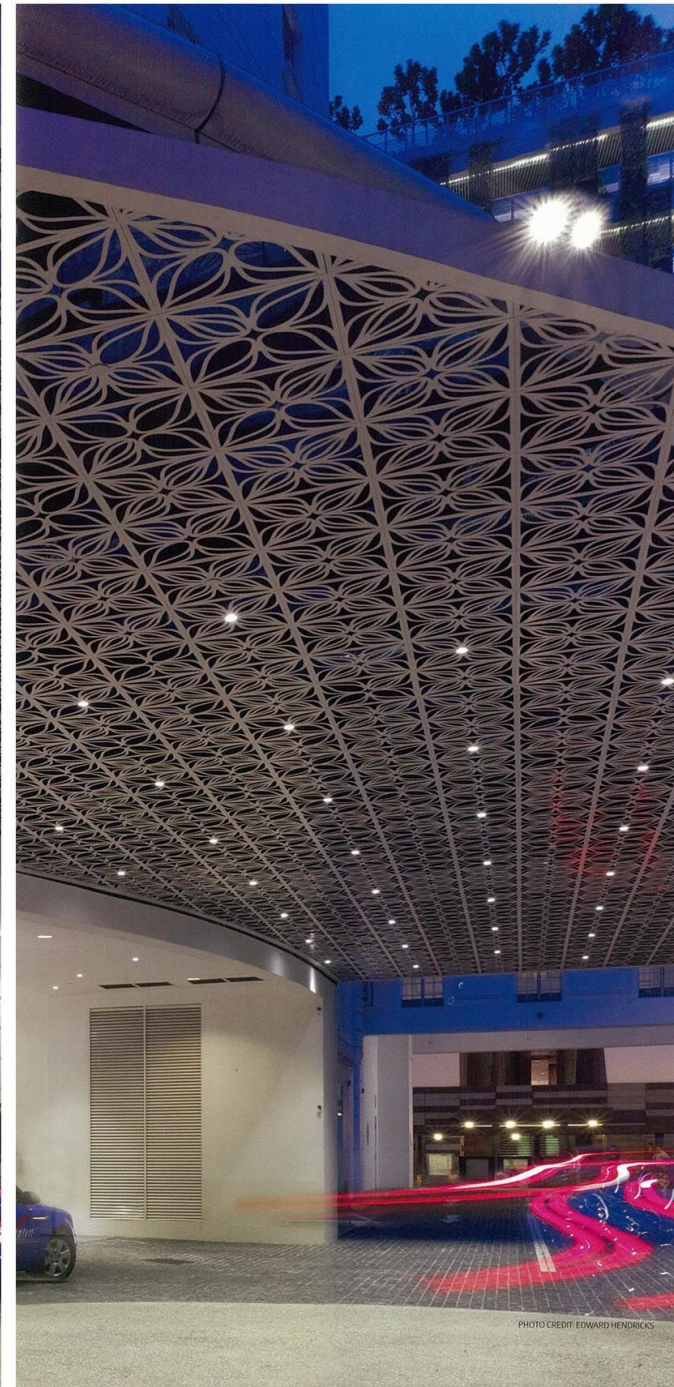
The tired, stuffy, and walled-up feel of the old Rendezvous Grand Hotel made for a clear starting point for WOW D.Lab, the firm tasked to redesign the guest experience at the 15-year-old establishment.

“These were measly entry points here and there; the entrance to the hotel all walled up there; no light coming in from here; the lobby felt very closed off; this courtyard was kind of dead, these staircases ...” the architect *Mak Hon Yue*, sitting hunched over the plans of the original building, gives an inventory of the building’s out-dated design features which, today, still jump out at him.

In plan, it looked like this was going to be a straightforward, if rigorous, case of righting the wrongs. The walls would come down, escalators and staircases relocated, old entrances sealed and new ones opened – all the necessary reorganisation to let in natural light and air, and create a more intuitive spatial flow. There was just one other challenge, though.

“The design problem with this building is that you’ve got the old conserved shophouse in front, the modern new tower that’s behind, with the interface between the new and old being the replica of the old,” Mak relates. “We asked, what can we as architects do to be sensitive to this setting? Do we try, as was done, to mimic the old, to get the imitation of the old as authentic as possible? Or do we find an interface between the new, the old, and what we are doing?”

Clearly, for Mak and his research-based practice, the project at hand went beyond a matter of



GO WITH THE FLOW:
Spaces within the hotel
are presented layers
that weave into one
another flowingly



refurbishment. Opting not to be held back by what had been done, the team decided to invent.

“So we said, look, the old is old, the new is new. We acknowledge everything that has happened. We will take it for what it is and come in with this new element. If we are going to define the day and age we are in, we need a new language.”

The “new language” is, in a large part, aesthetics – contributed by a humble but quintessential Pan-Asian symbol that is the rice stalk. Taking the rice stalk’s unique form as a starting point, the team worked on abstracting and evolving it into design, sometimes pulling it into broad, sweeping loops and tall, branched clusters, others condensed into ribbons and intricate florals. These patterns are then form-fitted into floors, railings, screens, breezeblocks and even the profiles of the door handles so even when different, they become nuanced echoes of one another. Diverse spaces and elements of the building therefore speak, as it were, the same language.

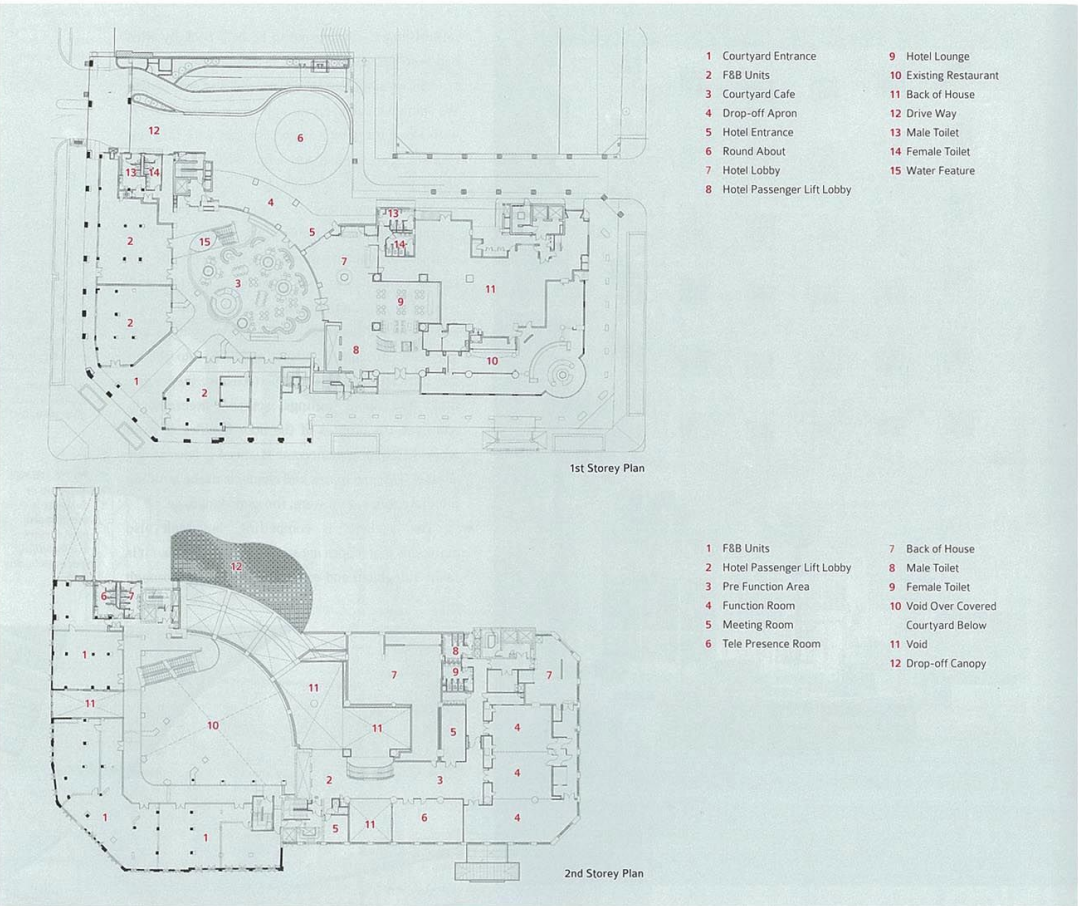
The aesthetic is compelling, but Mak also maintains that it does not stand on its own; rather it is really integrated and expressed through a thorough

← **SKY LIGHT:**
Floating, cloud-like
artwork in the sunlit
main atrium
inspires a sense
of daydreaming

↓ **WHITE RISING:**
A column in the lobby
is transformed
from eyesore
to a beautiful,
space-anchoring
feature

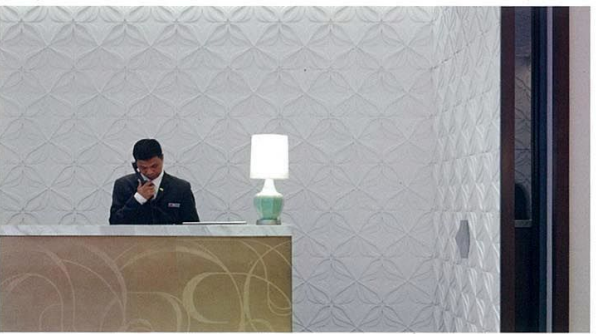
"IF WE ARE GOING TO
DEFINE THE DAY AND AGE
WE ARE IN, WE NEED A
NEW LANGUAGE"





- 1 Courtyard Entrance
- 2 F&B Units
- 3 Courtyard Cafe
- 4 Drop-off Apron
- 5 Hotel Entrance
- 6 Round About
- 7 Hotel Lobby
- 8 Hotel Passenger Lift Lobby
- 9 Hotel Lounge
- 10 Existing Restaurant
- 11 Back of House
- 12 Drive Way
- 13 Male Toilet
- 14 Female Toilet
- 15 Water Feature

- 1 F&B Units
- 2 Hotel Passenger Lift Lobby
- 3 Pre Function Area
- 4 Function Room
- 5 Meeting Room
- 6 Tele Presence Room
- 7 Back of House
- 8 Male Toilet
- 9 Female Toilet
- 10 Void Over Covered Courtyard Below
- 11 Void
- 12 Drop-off Canopy

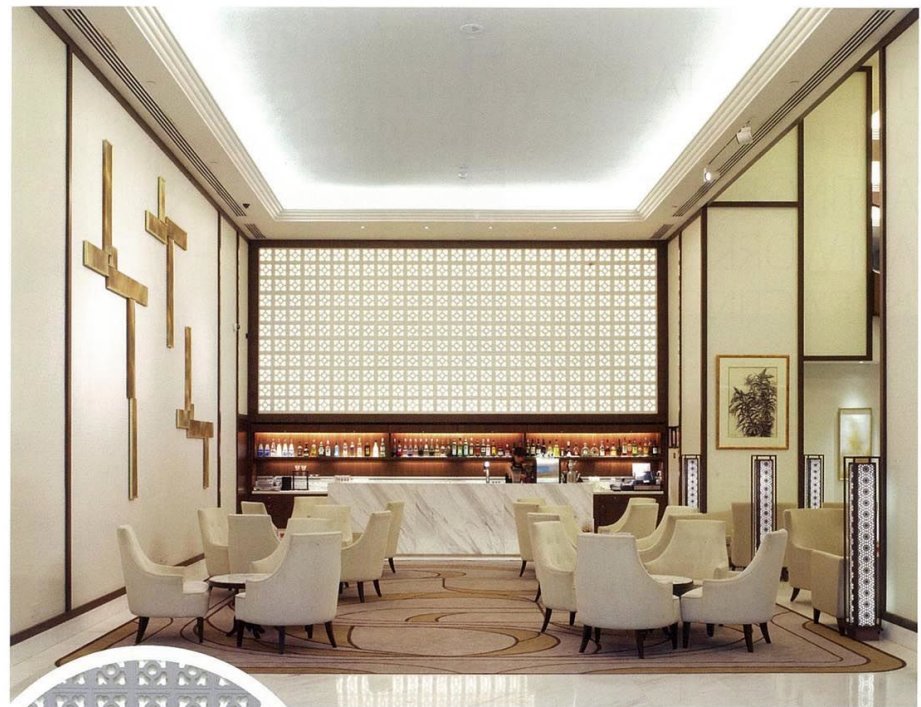


← **APPLIED ART:** Motifs are patterned to great effect as a memorable backdrop

spatial rethinking. “The ‘language’ is both form and function – the function creates shading, creates visual interest to the space.” Indeed, aesthetics and space are in a dialogue here, and the result of this process is nothing short of transformative.

For a start, the hotel’s drop-off point, which previously hardly left an impression, is now topped by a new canopy filled in by laser cut aluminium modules across a gradient density.

“We didn’t add any more glass; we just created a new frame profile. We played around with [the modules], in terms of location, in terms of density, so this becomes a matrix that looks quite complex,” explains Mak. “The whole idea is that when the



← **PULLED TOGETHER:** Artwork, architecture, and furnishing scheme come into an elegant composition at the lounge

↓ **IN DETAIL:** A customised lamp references lanterns and the hotel’s Asian heritage



EASY BREEZY: Traditional breezeblocks fit right into place with the building’s new aesthetic language

sun hits it, there will be different densities of light and patterns on the floor. It gives a better sense of arrival.”

The appeal of the experience continues through the choreography of spaces inside. Multiple layers of screens and panels used around the common areas create distinct destinations that relate to one another. The hotel is not given away all at once, but sequenced as an experience. Concepts of fluidity also contribute to circulation, and, again, in no small part thanks to the high level of detailing put into the redesign. In the floor, for example, sweeping and swirling patterns are originated from the outside, weaved into the courtyard, before being led back into the lobby.

A key area that was revitalised is the central heritage courtyard, now enjoyed as an indoor-outdoor conservatory. Here, natural light pours in where it used to be closed in and dark, and sight lines to the commercial and retail spaces around the courtyard were also re-established, partly through the relocation of bulky staircases and escalators.



TAKING THE RICE STALK'S
UNIQUE FORM AS
A STARTING POINT,
THE TEAM WORKED ON
ABSTRACTING
AND EVOLVING IT
INTO DESIGN



MOVE ON: ↑
The project involved some reconfiguration, including the relocation of some of its staircases

←
LACE WORK:
Filigree-like partitions are just one of the ways texture has been introduced

With light and air introduced, the place feels livelier, warmer, and more casual, providing a nice balance to the colonial overtones in the old building.

“Even from the upper levels you can look into this courtyard space,” Mak adds. “Our design strategy works not only aesthetically but also from a commercial viability point of view. We understand businesses; we know how crucial connection and lines of sight are to all the restaurants and retail shops on the ground floor, and this space is really central to the idea,” Mak says of the courtyard, which is really giving not just the building, but also the hotel, its new lease of life. ♦

↓ RENDEZVOUS GRAND HOTEL SINGAPORE

Architect WOW Architects
Interior Designer WOW d lab
Project Team Wong Chiu Man, Warren Liu, Mak Hon Yue, Tay Liam Kheng, Lito Gracia, Mannelito Vicente, Anne Marique
Structural and M&E Consultant BECA (Singapore)
Quantity Surveyor Rider LEvett Bucknall
Lighting Consultant Light Cibles
Main Contractor Sunray Woodcraft Construction
Time to Complete 9 Months
Total Floor Area 19,700 (Total)
14,000sqm (Refurbished)

WOW Architects (65) 6333 3328 wow.sg

Furniture Generally throughout custom designed by WOW, manufactured by Sunray Woodcraft and Abitex.

Lighting Generally throughout, lighting from Million Lighting Company.

Finishes In Atrium, Semi-united System and Heat Strengthened Laminated Low-E Glass from Mero Asia Pacific. In Lobby, Flamed Black Sesame Granite, Polished Silver Cloud Marble, Handmade

Concrete Tiles, Polished Bianco Marine Marble, Black ceramic Mosaic Tile, from Engareh Singapore and UMG. Generally throughout, Vertical Aluminium Screen and Wall Panelling from Sunray Woodcraft. Generally throughout, Perennials Outdoor Fabric Upholstery from TD Fabrics. In Café Lounge, Custom Designed Carpet from Contract-Image; Masland Broadloom Carpet from Contract-Image; Vinyl Wall Covering from Singapore Wall Covering; Engineered Oak Timber Floor from DecoArt; curtains from TD Fabrics.

Artwork
Generally throughout, all artwork from Box.

Abitex (65)6745 7711 Box (65)9680 9010 Contract Image (65)6332 3055 DecoArt (65)9691 7523 Engareh Singapore (65) 6438 3398 en.engarehgroup.com Mero Asia Pacific (65) 6565 3040 mero.de Million Lighting Company (65) 6743 2033 millionlighting.com.sg Singapore Wall Covering (65) 6479 2822 Sunray Woodcraft (65) 6566 2311 TD Fabrics (65) 6295 5115 tdfabrics.com.sg UMG (65) 9450 7355