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ISSUE 055. 2010 \$8



material invention

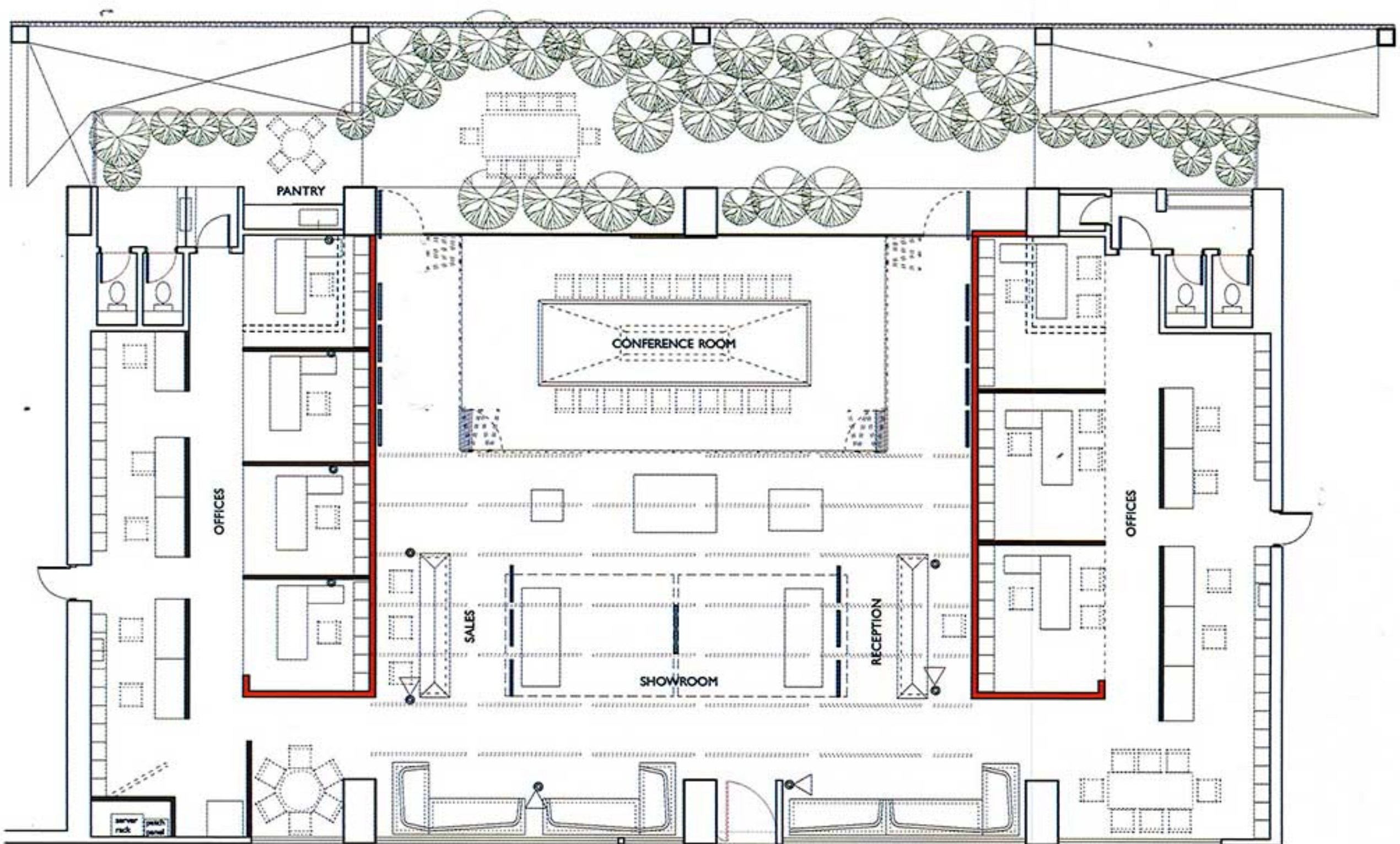
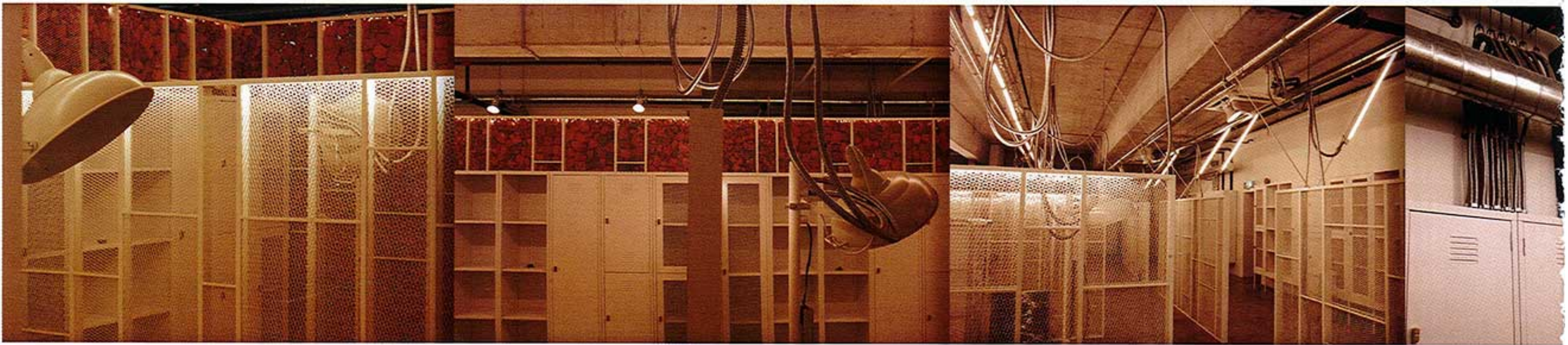
BY KENNETH CHEONG | IMAGES COURTESY BUILDING BLOC

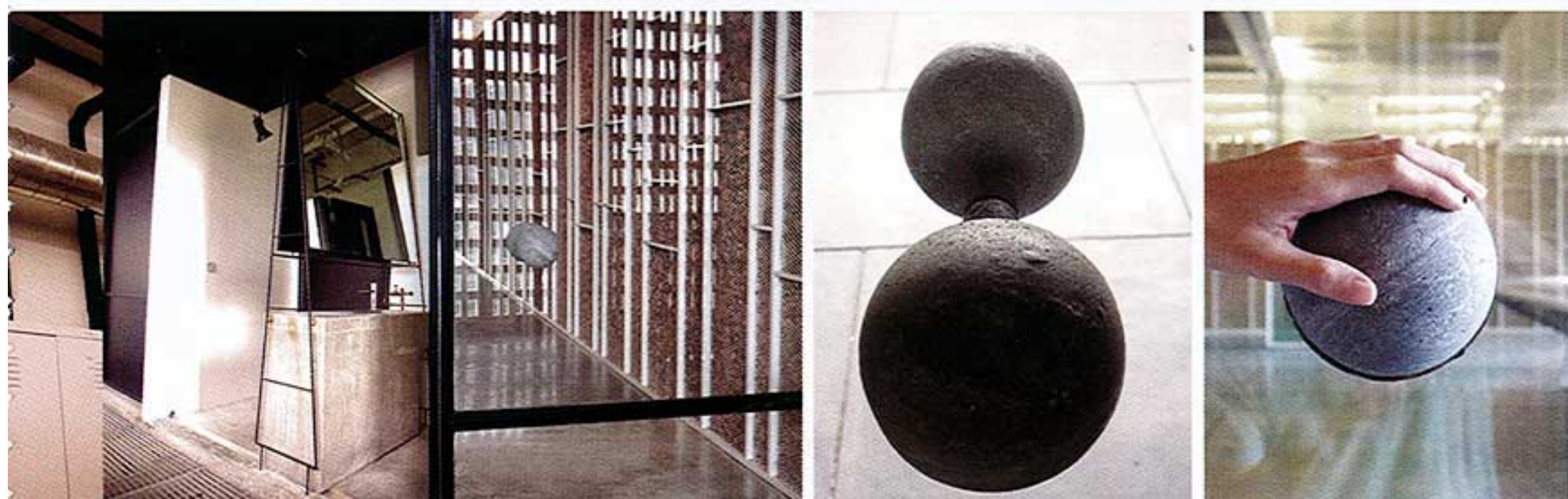
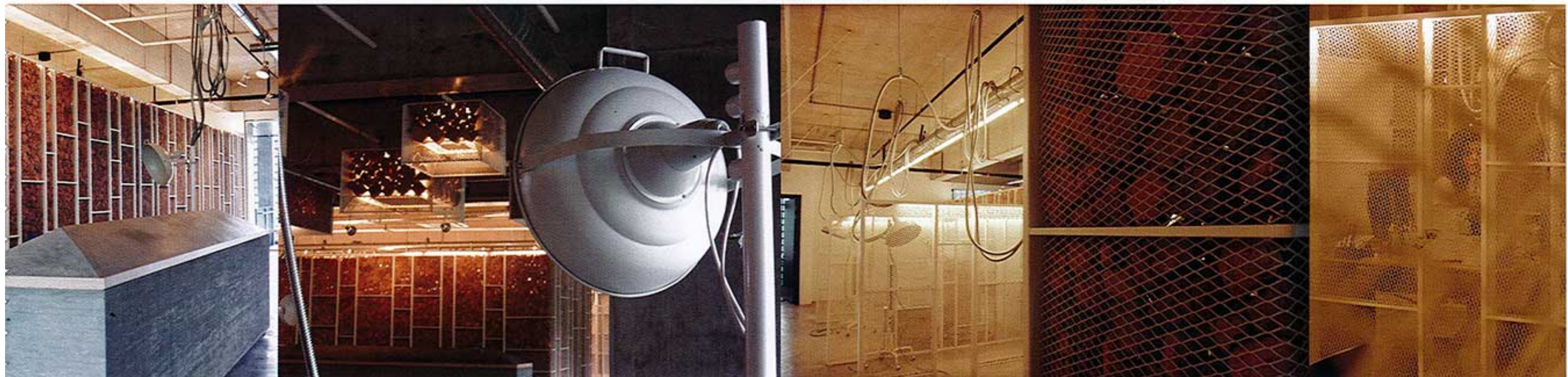
The interiors of Tujan Gemilang Sdn Bhd's (TGSB) new office by Building Bloc, using materials in their unadulterated form such as bare concrete and unfinished broken brick, exemplify the raw aesthetic deliciously.

The new office space is located in the PJ Trade Centre (PJTC), a new commercial development consisting of four office blocks and retail space in Damansara Perdana, PJTC, designed by Kevin Mark Low and developed by Tujan Gemilang Sdn Bhd, is inspirational in itself with the four 20-storey towers finished in exposed brickwork with a sheath of bare concrete vent block wall scaling the facades facing the adjacent freeway.

The office space designed by the dynamic duo of B C Ang and Wen Hsia of Building Bloc (*Utility Pole House, d+a 064.2010*) presents a space that is light and airy with the delicate execution of heavy solid materials like concrete and brick. On plan the 5,000m² office space is divided into three parts. A right wing with working space for the upper management and a left wing for staff. In between the two wings are the reception, a display area and a meeting room encased in a glass box with folding sliding doors.







A warm salmon pink glow permeates the entire office space. Broken bricks, arranged according to size in a custom designed white-painted expanded metal deck casing, provide the base for partitions and feature light fixtures. In the reception area, a sea of these diaphanous boxes float elegantly carrying the weight of the broken bricks. There is a light tartsness to the weight of the bricks housed in these filigree structures.

One could perceive that the treatment of encasing the broken bricks runs parallel with Herzog & de Meuron's Dominus Winery. According to Ang, the use of brickwork was intentional – and was to salvage the extensive use of brick for the floors and walls of the previous office space occupied by the clients.

'The original interiors of the office of this developer was built entirely out of red brick, the floors, walls. Our clients informed us that they might have to reinstate the interiors of their old office to its original condition, which will result in the removal of the brick floors and walls, which will in turn result in a mountain of brick debris.'

Brickwork also forms a signature building material for the client's developments, as is evident in the PJTC development with the extensive use of over-burnt brick for walls and floors. As the new office, the use of this signature

material is reinterpreted from a solid cladding and finishing material into a fresh delicate porous surface treatment.

'We presented to our clients the idea to transfer these brick debris as construction materials for their new offices. This would not only result in a reduction of new building materials but also create continuity to the corporate identity of the developer's office; it brings forward their identity in a new form in the new building.'

The meeting room, encased in glass sliding folding doors, provides a crisp transparent backdrop for the display area. Sitting prominently in the centre of the meeting room, a solid cast in-situ concrete table top hovers above a tangle of exposed rebar. Measuring 6.8 metres by 2.1 metres, the sheer weight of the table top totals a staggering 1.2 tons. The original intent for the meeting table was for the entire table with the legs to be casted in one contiguous cast. However, as Ang tells us, in doing so, 6 tons of concrete would be required. The exposed rebar legs was a design solution necessitated to reduce the dead load of this singular piece of furniture to accommodate the design load of the floor.

Echoing the weight of the meeting room table are thick slabs of cast in-situ concrete which form the seating and the reception table. In contrast to the weight of the concrete furniture, delight is in the detail of the doorknobs – a globe

of 150mm diameter solid concrete suspended in air. These custom spherical door knobs to the main door and the glass sliding folding doors to the meeting room are subtle touches which add an element of surprise.

The delicate, white-painted expanded metal deck carries an ethereal lightness throughout the office space. In the workspace partitions, two sheets of metal deck are arranged cross grained to achieve a translucent gossamer between workspaces.

All the services for the office equipment are housed overhead in exposed aircondition ducts arranged in a coordinated route to drop power supply lines, telephone and networking lines in tangle of flexible hoses reminiscent of a surrealist H R Giger apparition.

Each workstation comes with a dramatic task lamp attached to a service pole to tap into the overhead service route. The lamps evocative of Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo's Fortuny lamps are fashioned from oversized aluminum wok covers painted in white.

In the deft hands of Building Bloc, concrete and brick are manipulated with unconventional and fresh techniques. In the interiors of the Tujan Gemilang office, Building Bloc has created from the rawest of building materials – a refined and decadent visual feast for the eyes. +