

# INDIAN ARCHITECT & BUILDER

EXPLORE

## IN CONVERSATION

Jürgen Mayer, J MAYER H

## ARCHITECTURE

GMS Grande Palladium, Mumbai: MALIK Architecture  
Murugan House, Chennai: KSM Consultants

## SUSTAINABILITY (?) MANIFESTOES

Jaigopal Rao & Latha Raman Jaigopal: INSPIRATION, Kochi

## CAMPAIGN: ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

Reforming Architectural Education: A G Krishna Menon

## SPACE FRAMES

The Uncanny Presence of Development: Dinesh Abiram

## ETHOS

Order





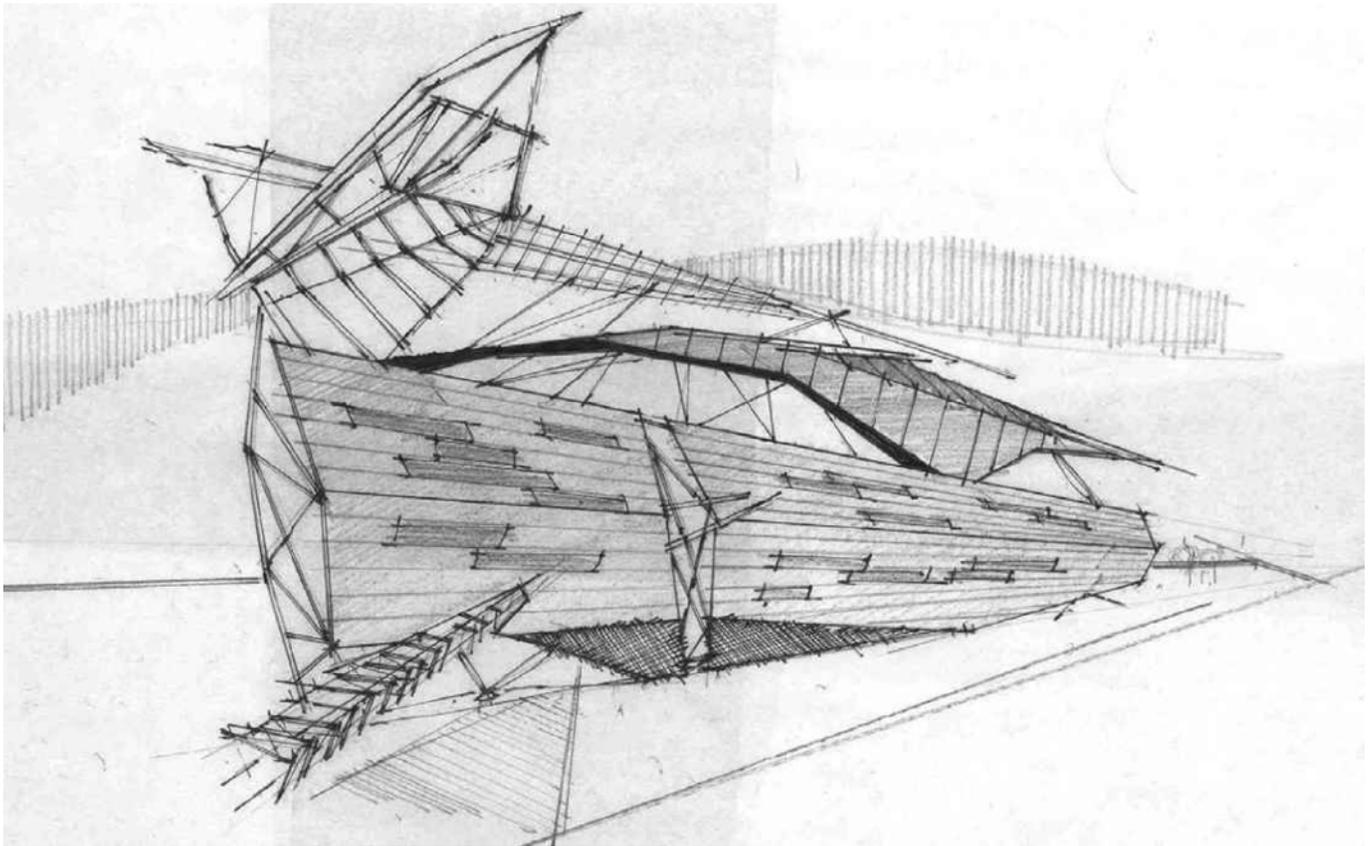
↑ *GMS Grande Palladium: Setting a new paradigm for commercial design.*

# Renegotiating a Paradigm

Redefining the parameters of commercial spaces by challenging their usually efficient yet rigid functionality, the **GMS Grande Palladium** in Mumbai by **MALIK Architecture** bridges both commercial and social considerations in the recreation of a new paradigm of design.

*Text: Chandrima Padmanabhan*

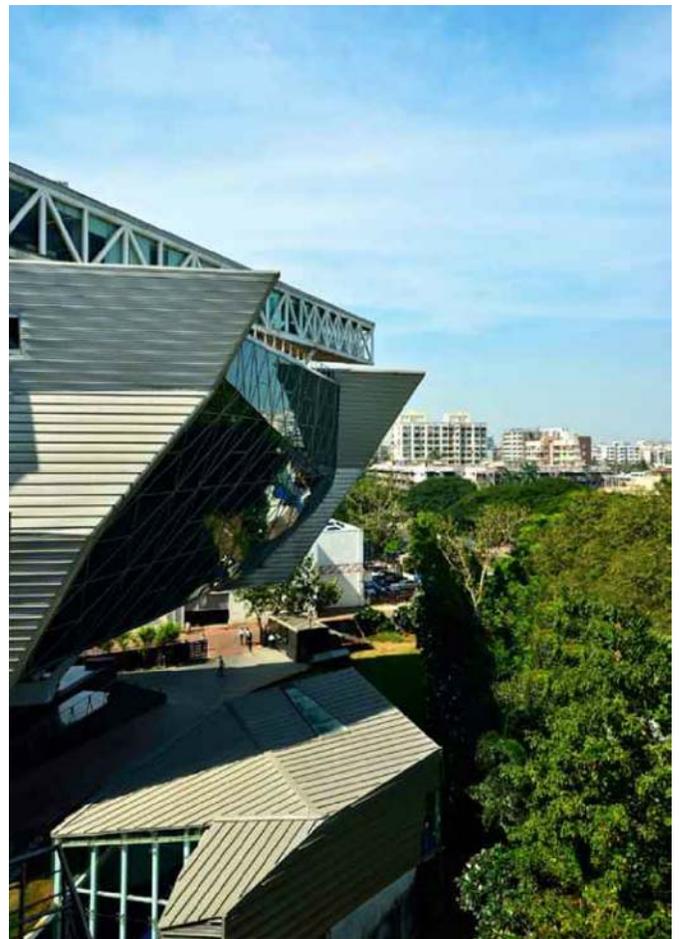
*Images & Drawings: courtesy MALIK Architecture*



↑ SKETCH OF THE FACADE.

The growing commercialisation in Mumbai is apparent in the skyline of the city which is crowded with towers of varying heights. The planning of these offices, however, does not reflect the evolution of work culture over the years. By designing a way of life that disallows any room for flexibility or development of programmes, these only serve as sterile landmarks in a disconnected world. In contention to this, the *GMS Grande Palladium*, by *MALIK Architecture*, which houses the client's office and four levels of commercial space for sale, sets a precedent for iconic yet responsible design. Located in Kalina, a newly developing business district, the resultant six-storeyed office building built over 180,000sqft, does not provide all the answers to the complex issues of the day, but it raises valid questions on the prevalent generic process of design.

In refutation of the soulless glass box, which has proliferated through much of the city including the neighbouring *Bandra Kurla Complex*, the *Palladium* makes a deliberate attempt to visually illustrate its design considerations. The design of the building was influenced largely by external factors and as a gated corporate space it can only be experienced by the public through its imposing visual mass. This volume, shaped by the diurnal cycles of the sun that is evident in the placement and angle of the fenestrations, and by the desire to visually lengthen the proportion of the structure, is contiguous to the façade which was conceptually derived by the architects from their perception of the context. According to them, the road-facing edge of *Dharavi* which consists of a mélange of recycled metal, patched together, formed the motivation behind the similarly stitched aluminium



↑ Raising the building by 8 meters frees up space for a landscaped court, activating the intermediary space as a social one, rather than just a transitory one.

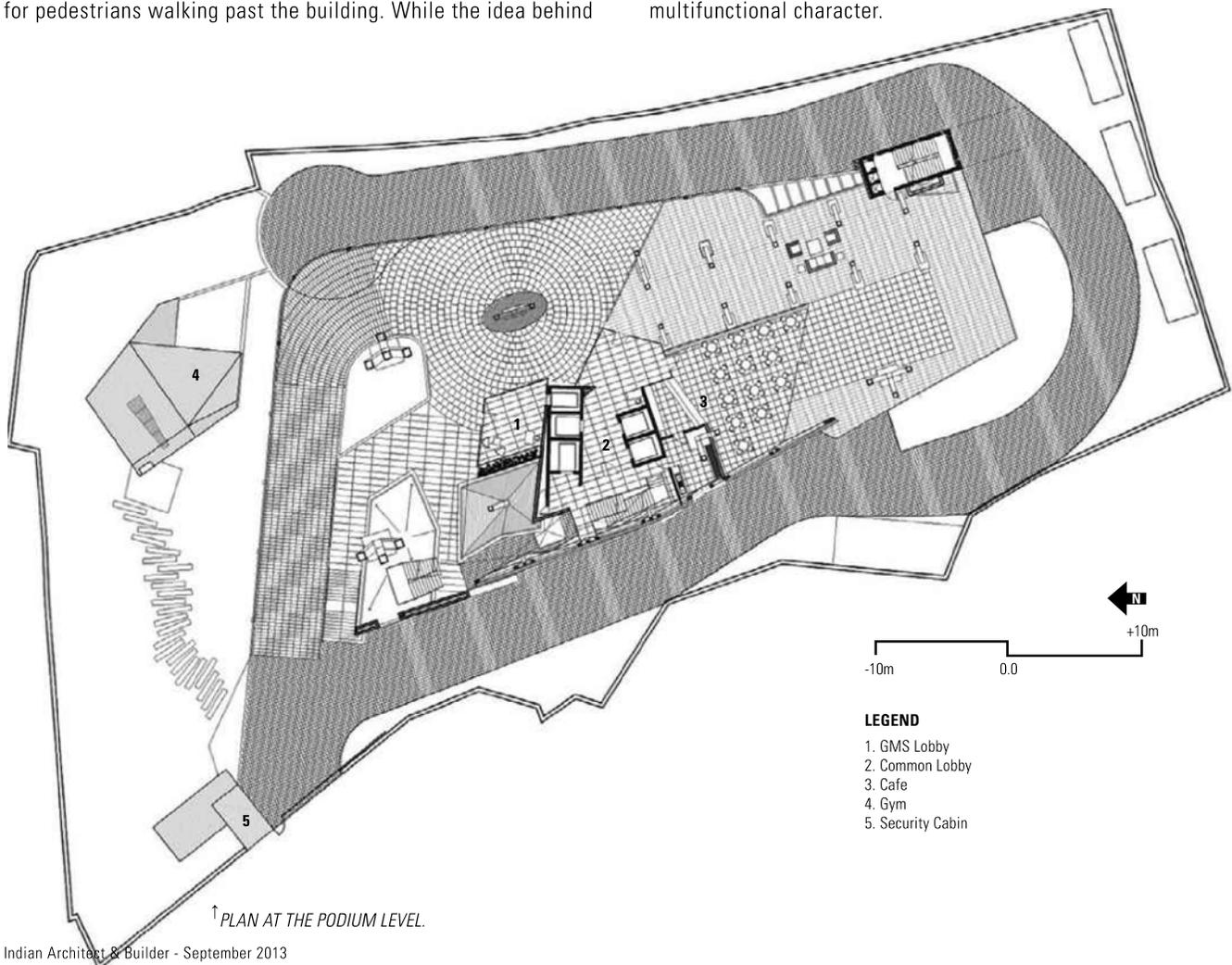
strips of 'Kalzip' on the façade of the building. While the planes break down the otherwise heavy monolithic veneer of the façade, the conflicting angles appear alternately deliberate and random, in contrast to the adjoining street.

Though fraught with a visual dissonance that sets the building apart from the cityscape, it does, however, bridge the usual disjunct in most corporate environments between the user and his place of work, which occurs due to the lack of a meaningful organisation of spaces. In a generic rhetoric, the designs of corporate offices today do not have a vision for its users beyond accessibility and efficient functionality, wherein a distinct detachment is observed from the moment a user steps off the sidewalk and into the building complex. The **GMS Grande Palladium** challenges what has now become a thoughtless norm, creating a more responsive environment for its users. Their interaction with the building is gradually orchestrated as they move from the street and into the landscaped courtyard, up the ramp and into the raised building, gradually increasing the scale of relation.

This easy flow of space was possible by lifting the building off the ground by eight meters, instead of creating a three storey podium as mandated by the official planning authority of the **Bandra Kurla Complex**. The basic premise behind the imposed planning restriction of the **BKC** by the government authority was to impart a desirable street interface to the business district, for pedestrians walking past the building. While the idea behind

this was theoretically sound, this way of design formed a distinct barrier between the two worlds of functionality for its users. Lifting the building off the ground proved to be a viable alternate, as it does not encroach on the visual experience of the pedestrian, and also activates the intermediary area between the street and the corporate offices, transforming it into a social space, as opposed to just a transitory one. This is possible because of the consequently reduced footprint of the building, which makes it more ecologically viable by freeing up the land to accommodate numerous trees, a water body and a cafe which dot the landscape; a reprieve from the otherwise suffocating corporate edifices.

The scaled lobby spaces with the landscaped court beyond, and its visibility from the office space above, constantly draw the eye, by imparting a human scale to the built fabric and allowing users to interact with it. Amidst this, a cafe with canted glass walls and a dining area that opens out into the surrounding foliage, allows its users to indulge in its natural ambience. The Clubhouse emerges from this landscape, built to a relatable scale, housing a well-lit gym with a double-storey, open-to-sky court, a juice bar and a spa. The mezzanine above, which is accessed through the landscaped court, serves as a yoga room or is open for other events. While these spaces are usually designed in the upper levels of the building, it was decided to make these spaces more inclusive by locating them on a commonly accessible floor. This provides better access and usage, encouraging tenants to use the area by its continuing visual presence, thereby only adding to its multifunctional character.



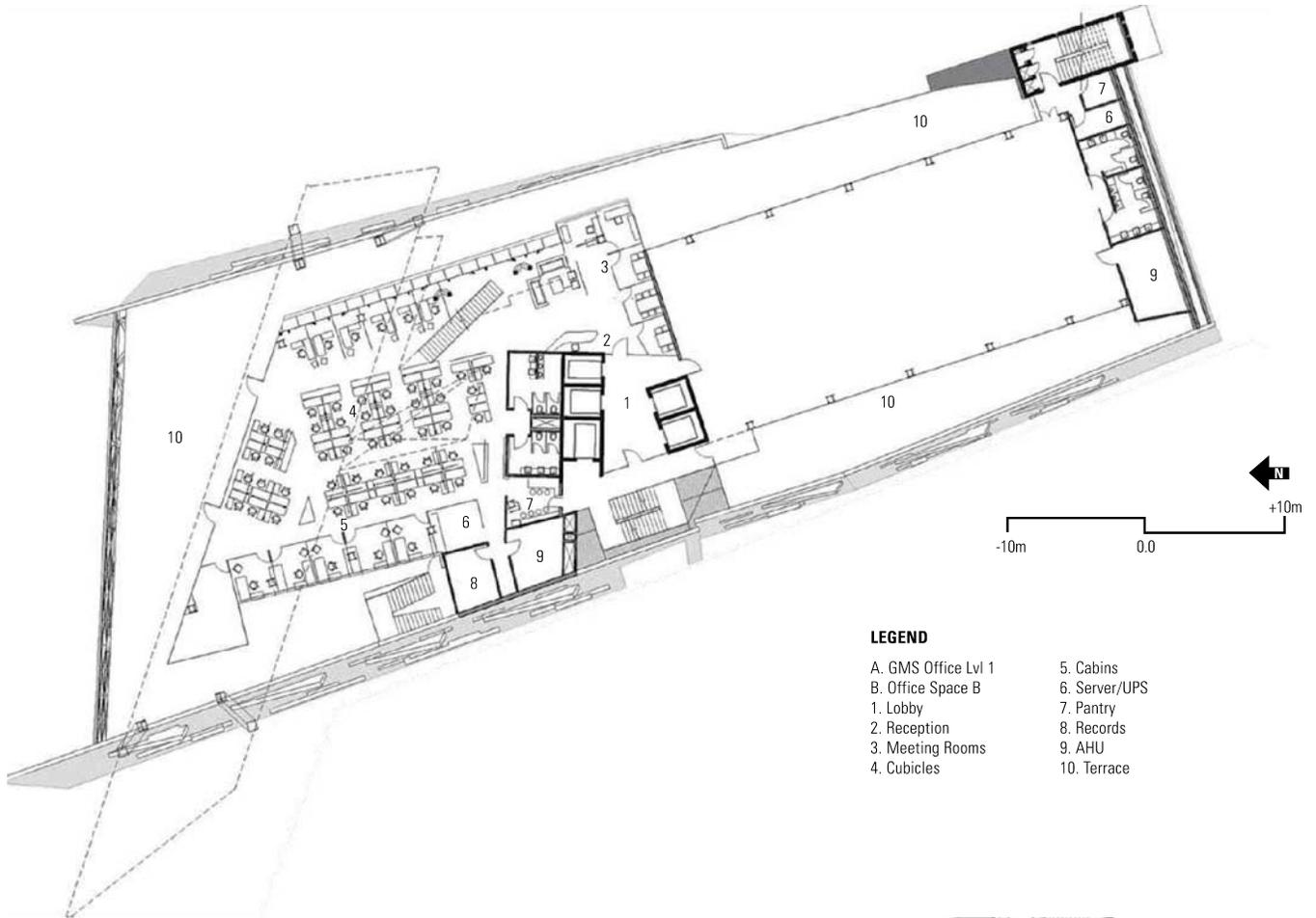
*In refutation of the soulless glass box, which has proliferated through much of the city including the neighbouring Bandra Kurla Complex, the Palladium makes a deliberate attempt to visually illustrate its design considerations.*



↑ *There is an easy flow of space through the gate and up the ramp to the raised building, gradually increasing the scale of relation.*



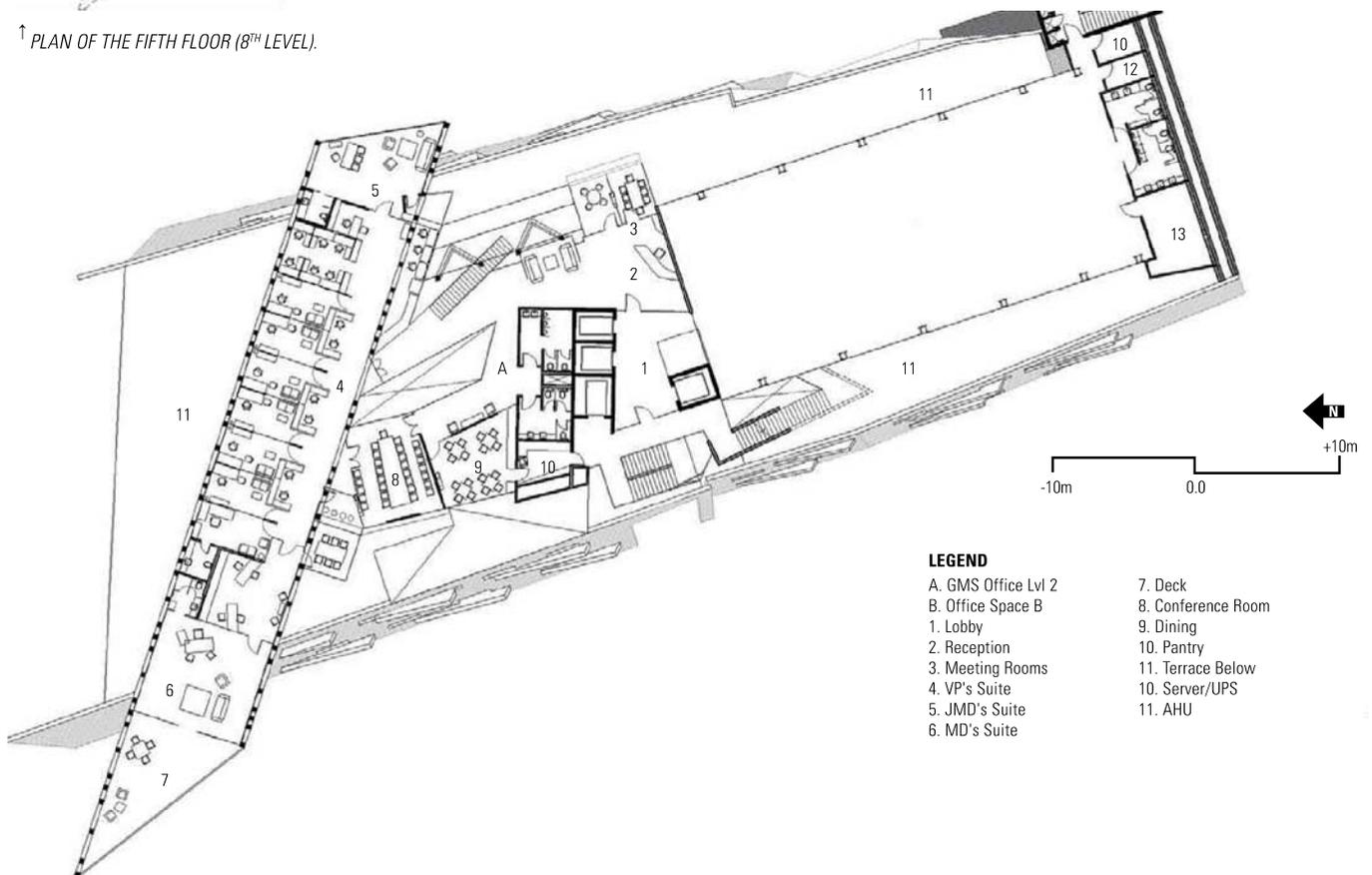
↑ *The ramp is flanked on one side by a landscaped garden, which slopes alongside it. The Clubhouse emerges from this landscape, activating the space.*



**LEGEND**

- |                     |               |
|---------------------|---------------|
| A. GMS Office Lvl 1 | 5. Cabins     |
| B. Office Space B   | 6. Server/UPS |
| 1. Lobby            | 7. Pantry     |
| 2. Reception        | 8. Records    |
| 3. Meeting Rooms    | 9. AHU        |
| 4. Cubicles         | 10. Terrace   |

↑ PLAN OF THE FIFTH FLOOR (8<sup>TH</sup> LEVEL).



**LEGEND**

- |                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| A. GMS Office Lvl 2 | 7. Deck            |
| B. Office Space B   | 8. Conference Room |
| 1. Lobby            | 9. Dining          |
| 2. Reception        | 10. Pantry         |
| 3. Meeting Rooms    | 11. Terrace Below  |
| 4. VP's Suite       | 10. Server/UPS     |
| 5. JMD's Suite      | 11. AHU            |
| 6. MD's Suite       |                    |

↑ PLAN OF THE SIXTH FLOOR (9<sup>TH</sup> LEVEL).

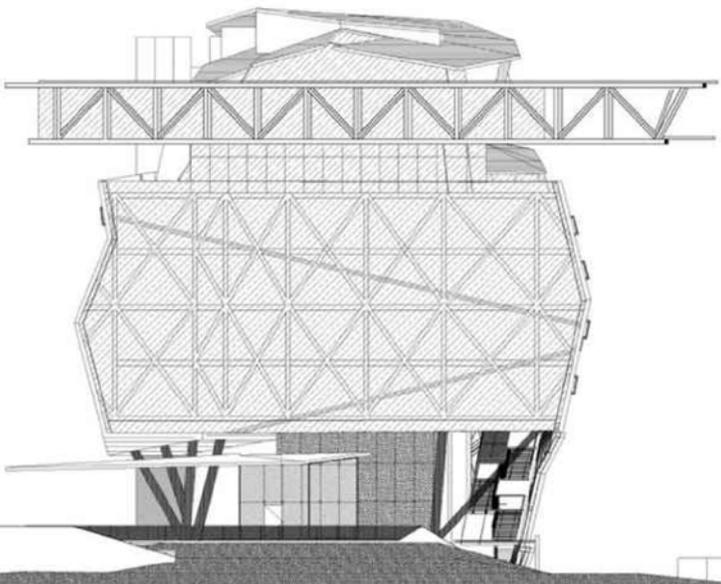


↑ *The functional spaces are organised around the central lift core with continued views across the space.*

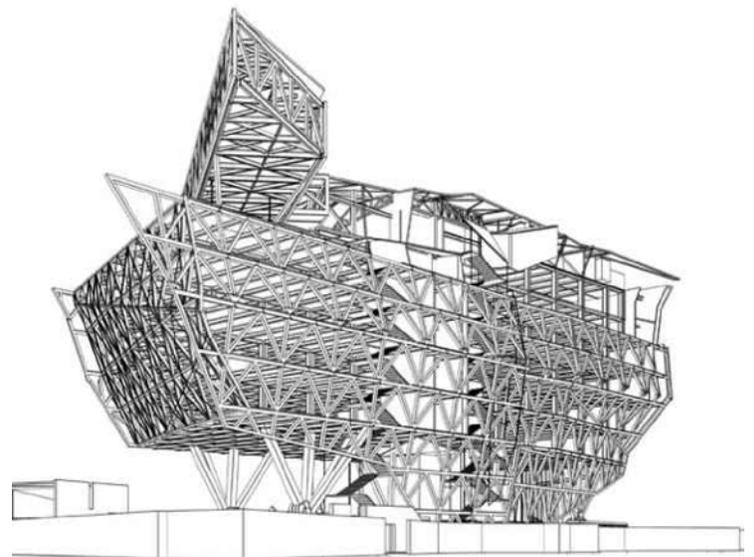
While the interspersing of social space as an activator was one of the main premises of the design, the architects also aimed to restructure the rigid plans of office spaces. Both these considerations were possible due to the unique feat of engineering by WSP. The steel superstructure has deflected shear skins that transfer the cantilevered loads to the angled members below, allowing a 16 meter central column grid in the interiors. The structural skins are expressed internally by recessing the internal membranes between the structural members. The flexibility it allows is apt for the four levels of commercial space, allowing the offices to be planned according to the functional requirements. This makes the design of the spaces less rigid.

Each floor, that can be leased out, is divided into two wings, separated by a common lobby space. This is workable even as

one large office occupying the entire floor by doing away with the dividing wall in between the wings. The fragmented office of the client is situated on the northern end of the top two floors that are internally connected, tied together by a double height space. This is visually disconnected from the rest of the floors, the only visual link being the structural membrane that turns over to form the roof and the wall. Long cantilevers, 25 meters in length housing the directors' suites soar out north-east and south-west into space from the ninth storey. The projected roof from the East and the West facade allow large, magnanimous floor-to-ceiling windows that flood the office with natural light. The high ceilings and double height spaces are the architects' way of alluding to the old industrial buildings of South Bombay that were characteristically linear, open, naturally lit and brought with them their own unique sense of space.



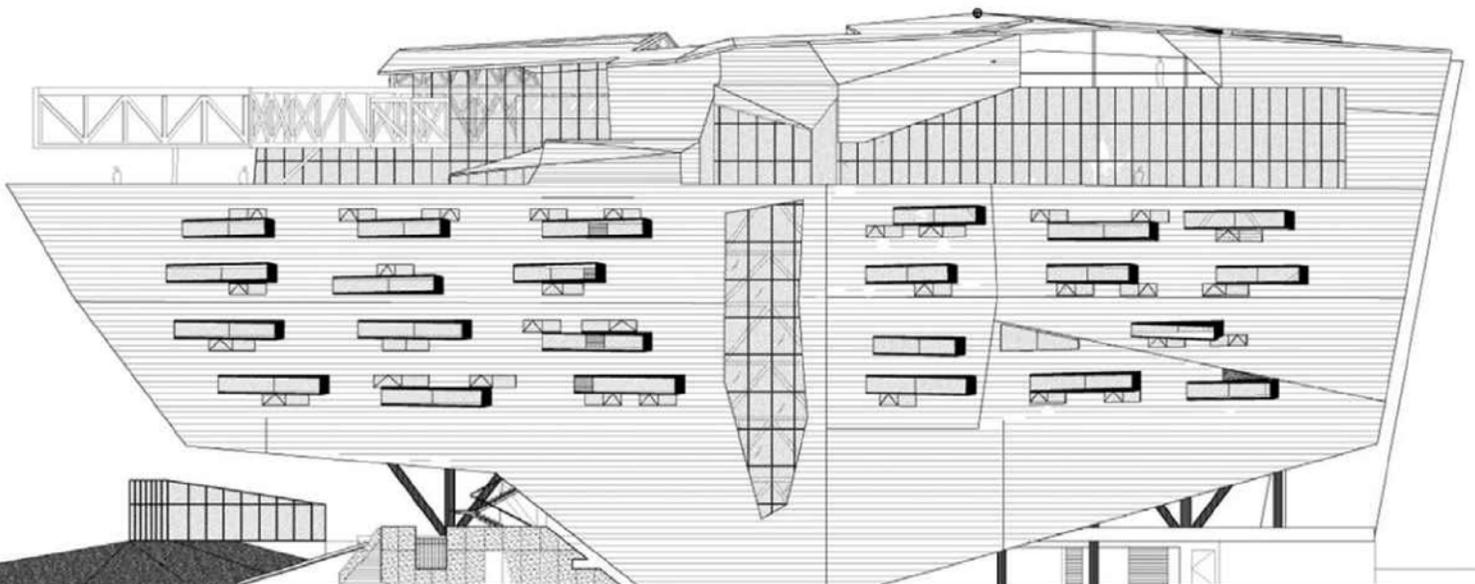
↑ *NORTHERN ELEVATION.*



↑ *SKETCH OF THE STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS.*



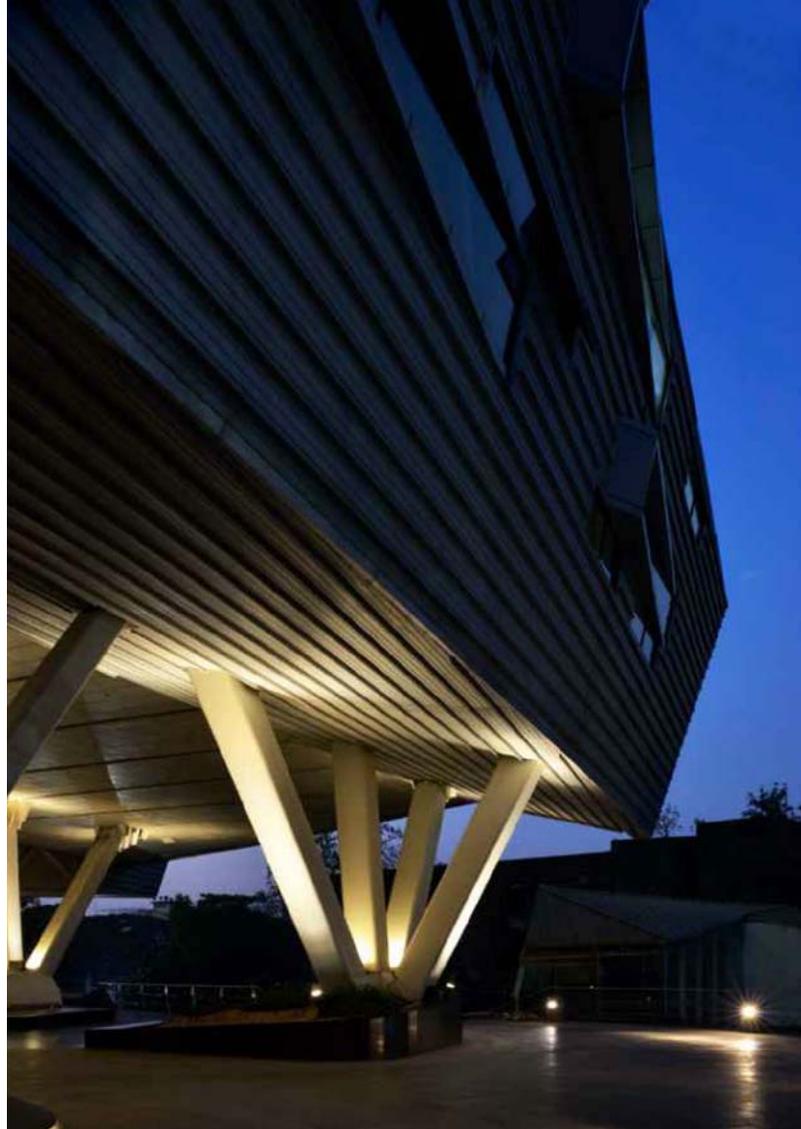
↑ A cantilevered north-facing tube punctures the upper level of the double height office of the client. The client and his son occupy suites on either end of the tube.



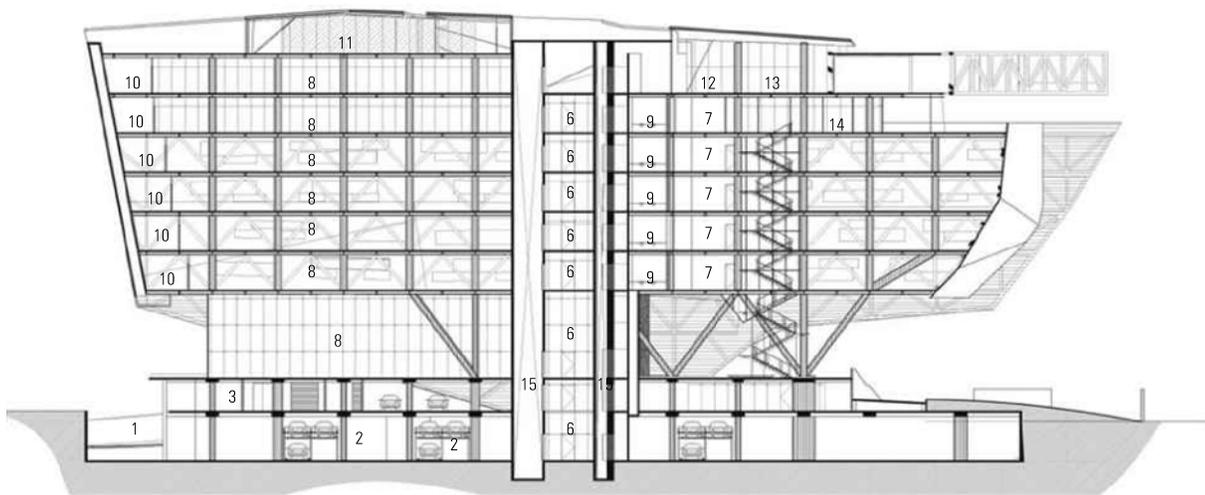
↑ WESTERN ELEVATION.



*The fragmented office of the client on the two topmost floors is visually disconnected from the rest of the floors, the only visual link being the structural membrane that turns over to form the roof and the wall,*



↑ The structural shear skins transmit cantilever loads to the ground. The structural skins are expressed internally by recessing the internal membranes between the structural members.



**LEGEND**

- |                          |             |                      |
|--------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| 1. Ramp to basement      | 6. Lobby    | 11. Terrace Lounge   |
| 2. Mechanical Parking    | 7. Office-A | 12. Executive Dining |
| 3. Electrical Panel Room | 8. Office-B | 13. Conference Room  |
| 4. Amenity Clinic Room   | 9. Toilet   | 14. Cabin            |
| 5. Cafe                  | 10. AHU     | 15. Lift Shaft       |

↑ TYPICAL LONGITUDINAL SECTION.



↑ The northern facade which receives the most light is angled back on the upper levels allowing maximum penetration of natural light through the laminated glass.



↑ The western facade is clad with seamless corrugated aluminium, punctured by small shaded fenestrations. These project towards the south to cut the glare, and are raked back on the northern side to maximise exposure to the cool northern light.

The light is brought into the four storeys of commercial space through the design of fenestrations pertinent to the orientation of each façade and the amount of light it receives. The North façade which garners the most natural light is made up of pieces of laminated glass that are interspersed between the truss members. The façade is raked back on the upper levels, which together with the laminated glass allows maximum penetration of natural light, thereby transforming the spaces. The southern façade, which begets the harshest glare, also abuts the rear of the Trade Center building. As this does not offer any desirable view either, the building's services are housed in this area, with a minimum number of horizontal openings to allow natural light to moderately filter through. The western façade similarly looks to cut out glare through small sun-shaded fenestrations on the corrugated aluminium façade. These project towards the south to cut the glare, and are raked back on the northern side to maximise exposure to the cool northern light. These small elements that accommodate a responsive sustainability, further allow its users a technologically sound design that optimises the climatic conditions and provides outdoor spaces that can be enjoyed in the rain due to the suspended form of the building as well as indoor, naturally-lit spaces that can be comfortably enjoyed in the harshest summer.

The GMS Grande Palladium is a constant negotiation of references. From its allusion to Dharavi to being acontextual in its immediate surrounding, it stands as a gated complex, endeavouring to be just as inclusive from an urban standpoint in a future discourse, as the spaces inside are today. The plan of the building not only addresses the smaller issues of internal functionality and ambient space but also the larger ones of interstitial multifunctional spaces that generate activity and transform otherwise rigid zoned spaces into an active dialogue between the building and its users. Providing a sensible discourse on the requisites of planning commercial spaces today, it sets a precedent that encourages a more inclusive work culture, inspiring and evolving spaces as it renegotiates a paradigm of multifunctionality. ■

#### FACT FILE:

Project	:	GMS Grande Palladium
Location	:	Kalina, Mumbai
Architect	:	MALIK Architecture
Design Team	:	Arjun Malik, Ketan Chaudhary, Jay Jani, Ketan Seta
Client	:	GMS Group
Structural Engineer	:	WSP, UK
MEP Consultant	:	WSP MEP, Delhi
Feasibility Study for Green	:	
Building Rating	:	Confederation of Indian Industries - CII Hyderabad
Energy Efficiency Studies	:	Environment Design Solutions - EDS Delhi
Landscape Consultant	:	The Gardeners, Pune
Civil and Structural Contractor	:	Pratibha Industries Pvt Ltd Mumbai
Glazing	:	Chiniwalas Pvt Ltd, Pune
Cladding	:	Vijaynath Interior and Exteriors Pvt Ltd Mumbai.
Cost of Project	:	₹60 Crores
Completion of Project	:	2011