

AIA Awards

Professional Award Winner

Office building Moganshan Road, Hangzhou

For the professional award winner, I am delighted to speak on behalf of the jury. I'd also like to mention that we were very much intrigued by the buildings that formed our final selection as none of us were aware of the authors. This reinforces the Awards premise that projects have been judged on design excellence alone.

We were very much struck by the power of this building in its context. It seemed to us to actually transform its environment simply through its aura of extraordinary calm and composure.

This modest ten-storey building has a profound totemic quality. It sits within the dense, generic urban neighbourhood of Hangzhou, but through its positioning at the middle of the site and taught proportions, makes a distinctive and monumental statement in relation to the city around it.

It is simultaneously familiar and mysterious. It resonates with the legacy of the Chicago School and could be seen as a tribute to Louis Sullivan. But it utilises this legacy in an entirely new way and in a new and challenging context. The simple gesture of framed picture windows with open-able sidelights radically re-configures the office building façade as a series of elements at the human scale. Its column-free interior conveys the same calm and turns even the dreaded 'suspended ceiling' into a thing of beauty, a kind of installation art. The copper cladding is a surprising finish, reminding the city that buildings are made by hand, and can be products of craftsmanship.

The jury felt that Moganshan Road building reinterprets and humanises the office building as a typology, combining both civic robustness and poetic materiality. This is an even greater achievement in the context of building in China. We're therefore very pleased to congratulate David Chipperfield and his team for the Moganshan Road office building, winner of the 2015 AIA Professional Award.

Alison Brooks May 2015