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## PARK + ASSOCIATES TEST THE EDGE



LOOK ARCHITECTS | LANZAVECCHIA + WAI | ARCHIFEST 2015 | RICELAB BY STUDIOGOTO  
LEO BURNETT HONG KONG BY BEAN BURO | ECOWORLD FLOW GALLERY BY MINISTRY OF DESIGN

# BEYOND



STUDIOGOTO CHALLENGES AND DISSOLVES THE CONVENTIONS OF SHOWROOMS, CREATING AN EXPERIENTIAL LABORATORY FOR TILE AND STONE SPECIALIST RICE FIELDS.

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PHOTOGRAPHY » EDWARD HENDRICKS

# DISPLAY



Above: On the fourth floor, the 'hotelLAB' offers various hotel suite settings. Mock hotel rooms can be discovered behind concealed doorways

Right: Just inside the entrance on the ground floor, the reception area gives way to the 'TREND LAB', which showcases the latest products



PRIOR TO VISITING RICE FIELDS – a provider of Italian tiling materials in Singapore – it is advisable to shed any preconceived notions of what a showroom should be. Even from the moment of arrival, before one steps foot into the reception area, the entry point (clad in a material that resembles slightly weathered wood and that is later revealed to be tile) hints at a unique experiential journey. Dubbed riceLAB, the project shatters the boundaries of its own typology and presents an intricate and interactive spatial immersion that is part exhibition and part laboratory.

When Rice Fields Director Terry Tan initially approached architects Kimberly Toh and Chioh-Hui Goh of Studiogoto with a proposal to design a space dedicated to showcasing tile as a featured product, Toh was not entirely convinced about the idea of highlighting a material seemingly inferior to its natural competitors like stone or timber. “Before this job, tiles were seldom our choice selection for interior finishes,” she confesses. “We had to experiment to see the potential in what tile could do in order to be convinced. We realised that with modern-day technology, the aesthetics and capabilities of the tile material have vastly improved. We wanted riceLAB to become an education hub that would show how tiles are now much more than they used to be.”

From the top (fourth) floor to ground floor, riceLAB (Toh is hesitant to call it a ‘showroom’, because it is so much more than that) encompasses a well-designed journey that allows a visitor to experience the featured materials in a multitude of ways. Each floor presents a different experience, designed with different customers in mind – from homeowners to architects and developers. Every element has been customised with a meticulous attention to detail, down to the sizes of tile storage drawers (themselves clad with tiles), and the location and placement of lighting fixtures.

The exploration of the capabilities of tile begins at the fourth floor – the ‘hoteLAB’ – with a comprehensive look into the design possibilities through various design hotel suite settings. Here, the architects’ scrupulous exploration of tile’s capabilities and advantages reveals a vast array of carefully executed details that unveil the strengths

Top: The ‘Lounge Suite’ within the ‘hoteLAB’ incorporates vintage furniture from the owner’s personal collection

Bottom: The ‘Premier Suite’ showcases timber-look tiles within the ‘hoteLAB’ on the fourth floor



“WE WANTED RICELAB TO BECOME AN EDUCATION HUB THAT WOULD SHOW HOW TILES ARE NOW MUCH MORE THAN THEY USED TO BE.”

» KIMBERLY TOH

Above: The boardroom, dubbed ‘riceBOLD’, caps one end of the second floor and incorporates a custom-made table with a marble top



“THE VISITOR NEEDS TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK TO BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY WHAT IS TILE AND WHAT IS NOT.”

» KIMBERLY TOH

Above: The third-floor 'MATERIAL LAB' is an educational hub targeted at homeowners and designers

LEGEND

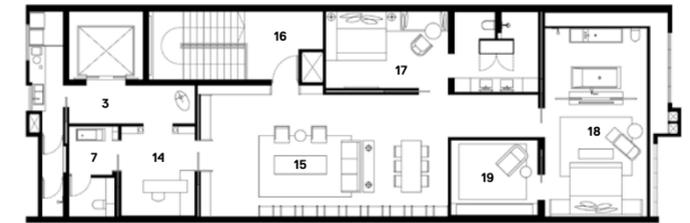
1 Entrance Court | 2 Concierge | 3 Lobby | 4 'TREND LAB' | 5 Lounge | 6 Storage | 7 Bathroom | 8 'PROJECT LAB' | 9 Office | 10 'riceBOLD' (Boardroom) | 11 'MATERIAL LAB' | 12 Discussion Room | 13 Material Planners Area | 14 Foyer | 15 'hotelLAB Living Suite' | 16 Swimming Pool | 17 'hotelLAB Hotel Suite' | 18 'hotelLAB Premier Suite' | 19 'hotelLAB Lounge Suite'

of the material in surprising and eye-opening ways. Beyond the floor, tile has been applied on walls (with a variety of joint treatments), joinery, and even on custom-made basins. By deliberately juxtaposing the tile with the natural counterparts, Studiogoto chooses to reveal how one material can effortlessly be used as a substitute for the other. A fun game of 'guess that material' ensues in the process.

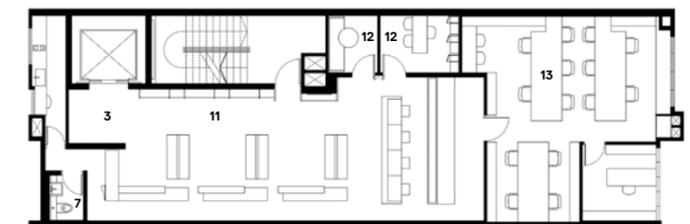
“The lab is not about plastering every surface with tile to overwhelm the visitor. It's about demonstrating the various ways tile can be used, and also selectively inserting natural materials to complement the tile. We have intentionally placed stone and a tile that looks like stone side by side for comparison. The visitor needs to take a closer look to be able to identify what is tile and what is not,” explains Toh.

One floor below, the 'MATERIAL LAB' takes the visitor a step deeper in their exploration of tile and its properties. Here, a wide range of tile samples is presented. QR codes on the back of each sample offer the instant gratification of seeing the chosen tile in a built environment simulation on one of the monitors. In the user-friendly shopping experience offered in the 'MATERIAL LAB', every cabinetry detail and light angle aids in a customer's tile selection process.

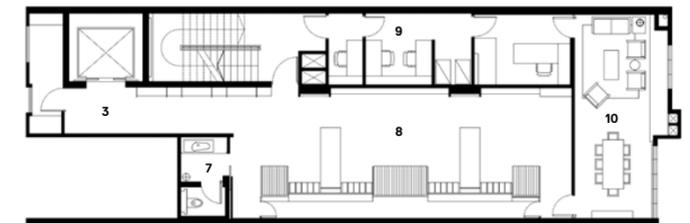
Toh compares the space to an education hub for homeowners and designers. She explains, “Just as we had to experiment with tile to be convinced of its versatility of usage, a customer has to experiment before making a purchase. We paid a lot of attention to the details, from where a customer can put their bag to the provision of a magnetic layer on the back of each tile.” Magnetic strips running the length of the countertop storage trays allow the tile samples to be stood vertically for inspection. “We've ensured that the samples can be viewed at different angles and with the flexibility of moveable light sources,” explains Toh.



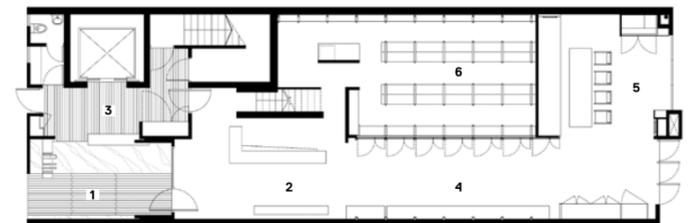
4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR PLAN



3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR PLAN



2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR PLAN



1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR PLAN

THE PROJECT SHATTERS THE BOUNDARIES OF ITS OWN TYPOLOGY AND PRESENTS AN INTRICATE AND INTERACTIVE SPATIAL IMMERSION.



Above: The stairway landing at the fourth floor has been imagined as a swimming pool, with the roof access ladder appropriated as a pool ladder

Similarly, in the 'PROJECT LAB' on the second floor, Toh and Goh worked closely with Tan to design a space that placed customer experience at its core. This space, which caters principally to designers, architects and developers, incorporates large-format display areas, sliding display screens, customised working stations and provisions for different lighting tones. "From day one, we wanted this to be a discussion area – a space where architects and designers could bring in other materials, and experiment with different colours and textures," explains Toh.

The journey through the lab concludes in the ground-level 'TREND LAB' – a space showcasing the latest design trends and industry innovations. More than just a showroom, riceLAB reveals a vision that aligns the company's philosophy of showcasing the design possibilities of tiles in unique and interactive ways with sensitive and highly crafted spaces. With every custom detail illustrating the versatility of the material, riceLAB is just what the architects and the owners envisioned it to be – an interactive space that sparks design thoughts and encourages practitioners to push the boundaries and conventions of design. «



## RICELAB

**CLIENT** Rice Fields (Investments) Pte Ltd

**ARCHITECT** Studiogoto

**PROJECT TEAM** Chioh-Hui Goh, Kimberly Toh, Asa Darmatriaji

**M&E CONSULTANT** DLE M&E Pte Ltd

**LIGHTING SPECIALIST** Lighting Technologies / PSLAB

**BUILDER** Shining Development Pte Ltd

**CARPENTRY WORKS** Pinddecor

**TIME TO COMPLETE** 12 months

**TOTAL FLOOR AREA** Approx. 800 sqm

**STUDIOGOTO**

(65) 6844 9539 studiogoto.com

### FINISHES

In 'TREND LAB', flooring is Floorgres Reverse; reception counter top is IRIS Hillite. In 'PROJECT LAB', flooring is FMG Road and Floorgres Reverse; walls are finished with FMG Road; display panels (dry lay slanting wall), wall-hung drawers are cabinets are finished with Levantina Hydro; benchtops are finished with IRIS Road. In 'riceBOLD' (boardroom), flooring is Mirage Allways; walls are finished with Cotto Metal. In 'MATERIAL LAB', flooring is Floorgres Reverse; display cabinets are Edilguochi Mud; reception counter is finished with compressed quartz (Stone Italiana); workbenches are finished with quartz (Stone Italiana) and wood insertion. In 'hotelLAB Archiculture Suite', flooring is Edilgres; walls are clad with IRIS Hillite Black Metal; cabinetry is finished with slim tile Laminam Filo. In 'hotelLAB Premier Suite', flooring is Atlas Etic; walls are finished with Edilguochi Mud and timber insets; bedhead wall is finished with Emil Petrified Tree. In 'hotelLAB Lounge Suite', flooring is compressed marble with rug supplied by XTRA; walls are finished with Refin Frame; cabinetry is finished with

IRIS Hillite. In 'hotelLAB' foyer, flooring is Atlas Doga. In 'hotelLAB' washroom, flooring is Ergon Stone Project; custom-designed basin by Studiogoto is finished with Grigio Carnico polished marble; sliding screen door is custom-designed by Studiogoto. In 'hotelLAB Swimming Pool', floor and walls are finished with Applani Anthologia. All tiles supplied by riceLAB.

### FIXED AND FITTED

Generally throughout, bathroom fittings are Axor and sanitary wares are Laufen, both supplied by Carera Bathroom.

### LIGHTING

Generally throughout, spotlights and downlights are supplied by Lighting Technologies and Kreon. In 'PROJECT LAB', desk lamps are Flos (owner's collection). In 'riceBOLD' (boardroom), floor lamp is Starck (owner's collection). In 'MATERIAL LAB', folding wall lamps are Artemide (owner's collection); lamps above reception are designed and supplied by PSLAB. In 'hotelLAB Hotel Suite', pendant lamp is by Blackhole supplied by Blackhole. In 'hotelLAB Premier Suite', bedside lamps are by Barbara Barry (owner's collection).

### FURNITURE

Generally throughout, all built-in cabinetry, workbenches and counters are designed by Studiogoto. In 'riceBOLD' (boardroom), custom-made table with marble top designed by Studiogoto; sofa is Hay supplied by Grafunkt; coffee table is Blackhole supplied by Blackhole; display stand is Sp-Haus 3 Plates, supplied by Grafunkt. In 'hotelLAB Archiculture Suite', lounge chairs are Cappellini (owner's collection); sofa is Hay supplied by Grafunkt; coffee tables are Hay supplied by Grafunkt; dining table is custom-made in quartz (Stone Italiana), supplied by riceLAB; dining chairs are Kartell (owner's collection). In 'hotelLAB Premier Suite', TV is Loewe supplied

by Atlas; armchair is Herman Miller Earnes supplied by Xtra. In 'hotelLAB Lounge Suite', chairs and coffee table are vintage.

**Atlas Sound and Vision Pte Ltd** (65) 6337 7851 atlas-sv.com  
**Blackhole** (65) 6883 1103 Carera Bathroom (65) 6261 6133 carerabathroom.com **Kreon** (65) 6222 3393 kreon.com **Lighting Technologies Pte Ltd** (65) 6744 2022 korr.com.sg **Grafunkt** (65) 6281 8465 grafunkt.com **PSLAB** pslab.net **riceLAB** rice-fields.com (65) 6692 1199 Xtra (65) 6336 0688 xtra.com.sg



Top: The 'PROJECT LAB' on the second floor caters to design professionals and developers with large-format displays

Bottom: Tile-fronted storage drawers and benches have been carefully detailed to showcase tiling materials in unexpected ways