

INDIAN ARCHITECT



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Communicating Architecture & Design

3 BUILDER

Interpretation



Assertive

Mumbai-based architect Hafeez Contractor's work is characterised by its ability to stand apart. Often branded as flamboyant, his current works go on to exemplify this characteristic trait.

Text: Kavita Parwani-Talib
Photographs: Courtesy Vinesh Gandhi



The focus on the visual imagery is usually a vital element of architect Hafeez Contractor's work. Having carved a niche for himself in luxury housing, Hafeez goes on to design commercially viable workspaces. While the concerns of client satisfaction have been quintessential in the projects featured, trends and materials used go on to indicate 'an architecture' influenced by the international.

Colgate Palmolive (I) Ltd, Mumbai

"A modern form emerging from a classical ruin," was how the architect interpreted the client's brief. Colgate Palmolive was keen on projecting itself as a company with strong foundations from the past and a definite accent on the modern. Taking cue from its locale, this office building is a neo-classical embellishment in stark white that fits into the affluent Hiranandani Gardens site at Powai, Mumbai with relative ease.

The project has been executed in a record time of 13 months (including five months for interiors). In keeping with its

1. An external view of the building shows the classical facade combined with the tinted glass.
2. A close-up of the well shaded entrance shows the neatly composed entrance bay complete with polished grill, tinted glass enveloped by the portal columns.



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outer facade, the interiors are done in a blend of styles – from the traditionally ornate to the simply modern. The entrance directly transports one into a four-storey atrium that immediately forms a vertical link to all the floors. An informal lounge looks down into the atrium poised over the entrance porch. The atrium lobby interiors is rich with overtones of 'Indian' elements, for example, traditional relief works in sandstone on the wall and patterns in the flooring. Most of the furniture is in Indian oak and mahogany, finished in polyester lamination. In an attempt to identify with the client, an undulating pattern is incorporated in the fire-escape staircase railing and in the inlay work of the lift lobby. This inlay pattern on the floor is done in Nepali marble and red elegate.

Functionally, the lower floor houses the laboratories, while the upper floors take care of the administrative section. The laboratories are disciplined with modular, sky blue powder coated furniture. Framed picture windows from the passage connect to the laboratories making the passage spacious. An open office plan and an acoustically designed false ceiling complement the basic planning. The administrative section comprises non-fussy modular furniture in co-ordinated colour schemes.

Compact discussion areas in wood panelling along with appropriate false ceiling design are tucked into the plan. Collateral planning has incorporated a library and a state-of-the-art gymnasium. A strict eye for detailing has made all the difference – a neatly fitted glass brick wall in the library adds a quality of light which complements function, well-placed niches fitted along the passage leading to the canteen become displays. Normally

neglected areas like the staff toilets, gymnasium and other recreation areas are also designed with equal care. These are welcome changes from the conventional and creates a refined ambience.

Projecting the company as a blend of the good 'old' and the trendy 'new' takes care of their image, that of 'a company firmly anchored in the present and deeply-rooted in tradition'.

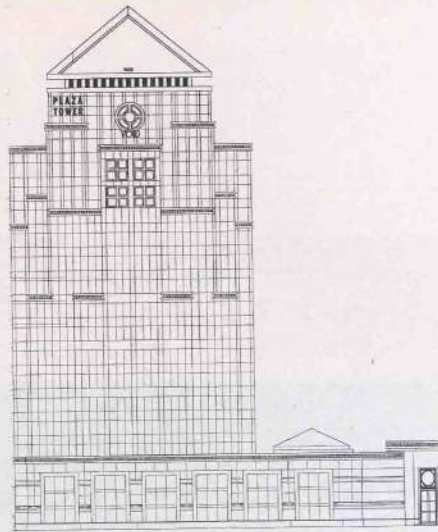
Taking cues from the world around, the architectural profession is overwhelmed by the past. New tools and technology like the one used in this project have a way of falling in with an architect's ideas and in combination with nostalgia, they form an interesting aspect. This serves a dual purpose – to underline the client's identity and to heighten a sense of drama in the space. Ultimately in today's world, where better to emphasise this than in the work place.

FACT FILE

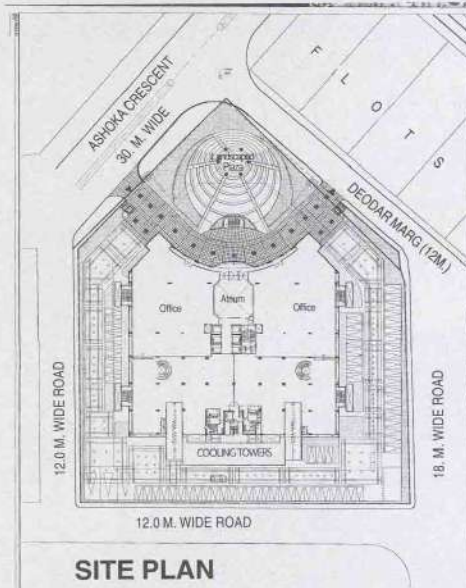
Project:	Colgate Palmolive (I) Ltd
Location:	Hiranandani Gardens, Powai, Mumbai
Builder:	M/s Hiranandani Constructions
Area:	Approximately 1,25,000 sq ft.
Exterior Cost:	Rs 1000 per sq ft
Interiors Cost:	Rs 18.5 Crores
Construction Period:	Approx 13 months (Including interiors) Oct 98-Nov 99
Associate Architect:	Hiten Negandhi, Sunil Gambani
External Contractors:	M/s Hiranandani Constructions
Structural Consultants:	M/s Mahimtura Consultant
Services Consultant:	M/s Eskayem Consultant
Interior Contractors:	M/s Jayant K Furnishers, M/s Jay Art
Electrical:	M/s Pravin Enterprises
Air Conditioning:	M/s ETA Engineering

3. The lift lobby
4. The executive cubicle.
5. Library cubicles.
6. The conference room.
7. Administrative section
8. The cafeteria.
9. The fire escape staircase.
10. The laboratory area.
11. Walkway to the cafeteria

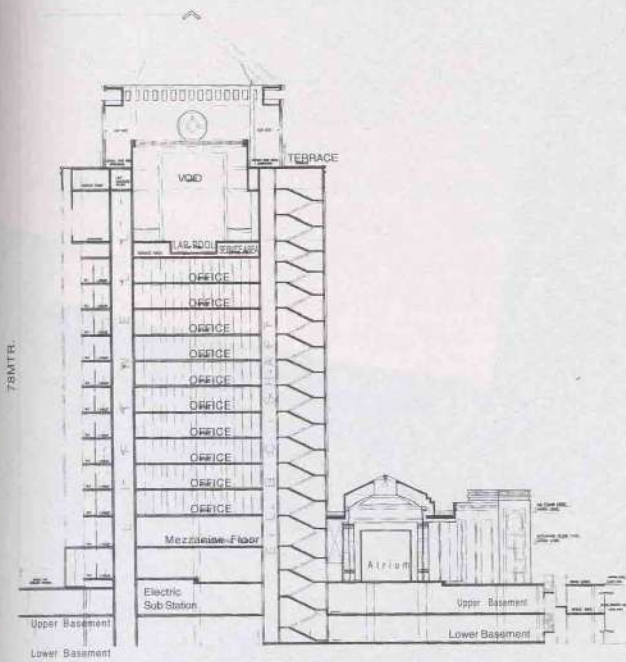




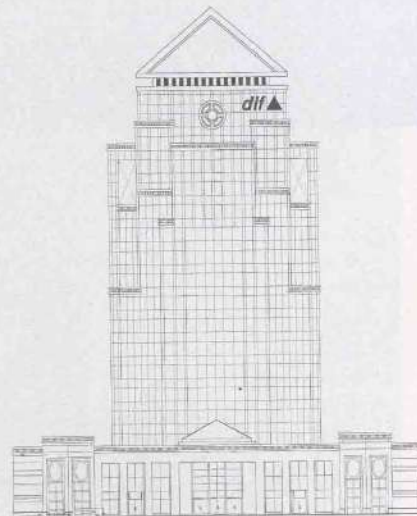
SIDE ELEVATION



SITE PLAN



SECTION



FRONT ELEVATION



13



Plaza Towers, Gurgaon, Delhi

For this project, the guiding force was a brief that strictly demanded a tailor-made space for multi-user corporate offices. The client, DLF, gave the architect a free hand while designing, the only requirement being that the building be distinct enough from all sides, doing away with the conventional, normally neglected backside.

Since the actual users were individual corporate houses, the building could not really highlight a client identity. So in keeping with the general corporate image, a seven-storey vertical structure in metal, glass and stone was visualised as an external cladding system to go with the international look. The users were varied and their requirements would fluctuate, so flexibility was the key word for the interior spaces.

Designed in a spacious site in low-rise Gurgaon, the landscape is integrated around the built-form keeping with its sculptural image. The form of the building gradually tapers, as the structure advances in height. This gradual stepping up of the form maintains the building scale. The clear surrounds around the building and the low-rise density in Gurgaon allow for ample views of the building. This dramatises its effect, especially as the glass clad structure begins to light up. The cladding systems are an interesting blend of stone (for the lowermost floor) and Alucobond panels for the upper floors, systematically broken up by glass.

A first for Gurgaon in terms of both cladding systems and high-rise commercial premises, it stands distinct in the barren low-rise townscape.



FACT FILE

Project Name:	Plaza Tower
Client:	M/s DLF Commercial Developers
Location:	DLF City, Gurgaon state
Area:	Approximately 2 Lac sq ft.
Parking	
Basement:	Approximately 1 Lac sq ft.
Materials Used:	Cladding Glass (Glaverbel make); Aluminium Panels (Alucobond) and Granite
Cost:	Rs1650 per sq ft.
Construction	
Period:	Approximately 20 months. (End 1996-Mid 1998)
Associate	
Architect:	Rajeev Trehan
DLF Project	
Team:	Anil Gupta, Ravi Kachru
External Finishing	
Contractor:	Consolidated Engineering Services (For Glass & Aluminium)
Structural	
Consultants:	M/s STUP Consultants
Services	
Consultant:	Sunil Nayyar & Associates
Air Conditioning:	Blue Star

12,13,14 & 15. Multiple views of the structure showing the scale with relation to the person as well as the surrounding landscape.



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Citibank Center, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Mumbai

"A building for an international bank and a structure which fits into any place on the globe," is how the architect summed up the client's requirements. One of the important constraints was the location, situated in the Bandra Kurla Complex, which bound the project by BMRDA building regulations.

To fit the bill, a seven-storey building clad in Alucobond, metallic panels and glass was the minimalist riposte. Metallic panels were an easy choice due to its time saving feature and durability. The composition of the building is uncomplicated with two rectangular blocks. The main structure is a rectangular box, whose facade is broken up by a geometrical grid that allows for recesses on the top most floor. This reduces the mass giving a non-fussy appearance. The plaza forms a

16. The symmetrical front façade creates a formal visual balance.

17. The entrance porch-cum-atrium that reduces the scale of the building with respect to the visitor.

18&19. Longitudinal view of the structure shows an expanse of glass broken up by a uniform grid.

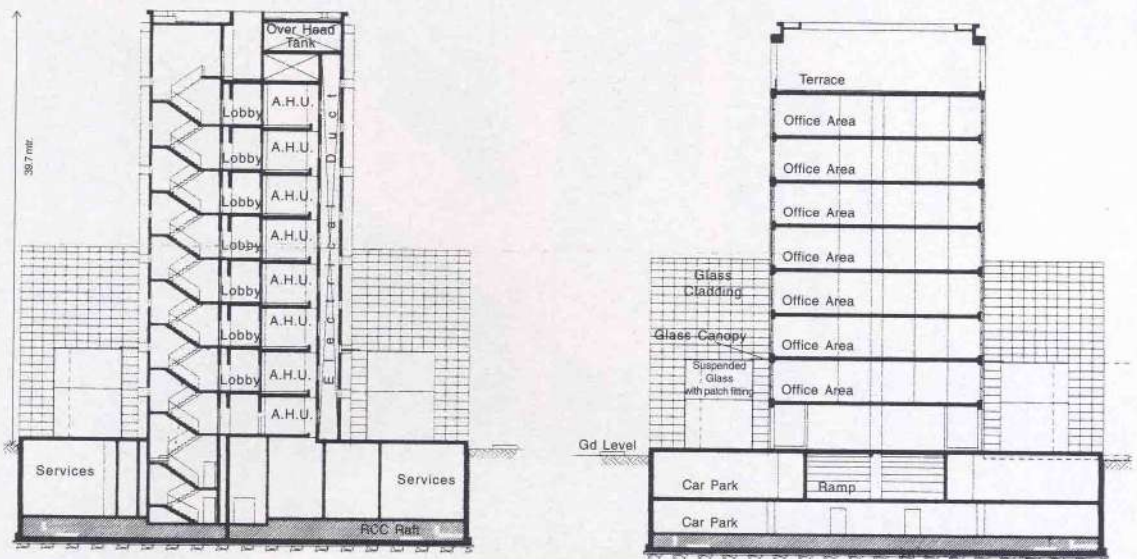


lighter element, systematically broken up by a colonnade.

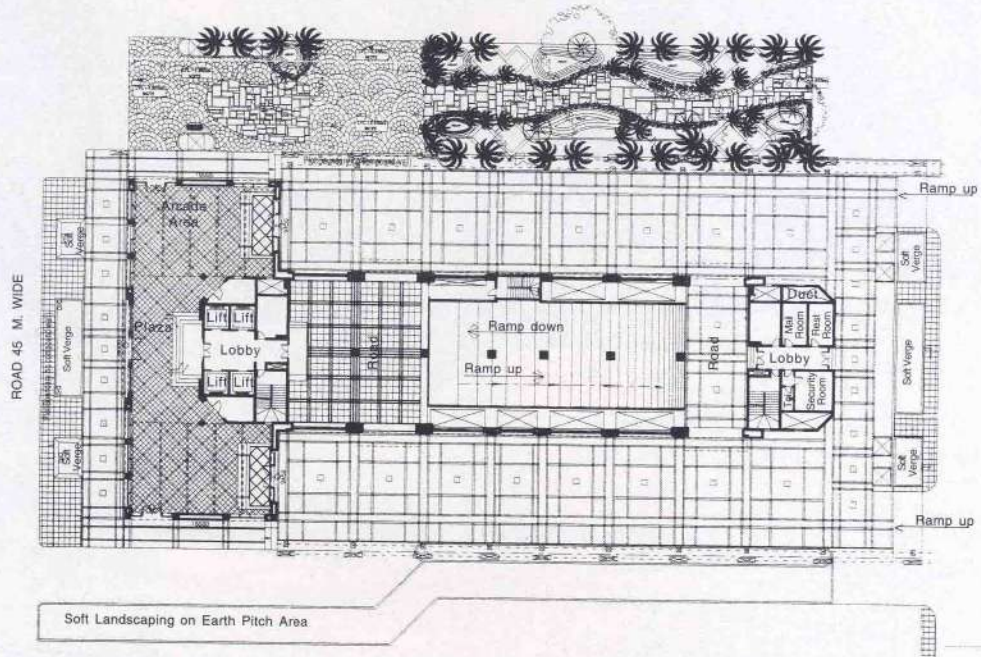
In terms of materials ready-mix, pumped concrete was used for construction, thus reducing its usage. Dry fixing of granite also speeded up construction time. Its services too are uncomplicated and conventionally planned. An area of 1,25,000sq ft was divided into two basements and eight storeys. Governed by stringent byelaws, a T-shaped plan was devised. The shorter arms take care of a compulsory 'plaza' –

17m wide that works out to form a prescribed colonnade clad in granite and glass. A view from the plaza looking outside reveals spaciousness, unknown to a bustling Mumbai. The longer arm of the 'T' takes care of the office requirements. Conventional office requirements called for a modular system of furniture.

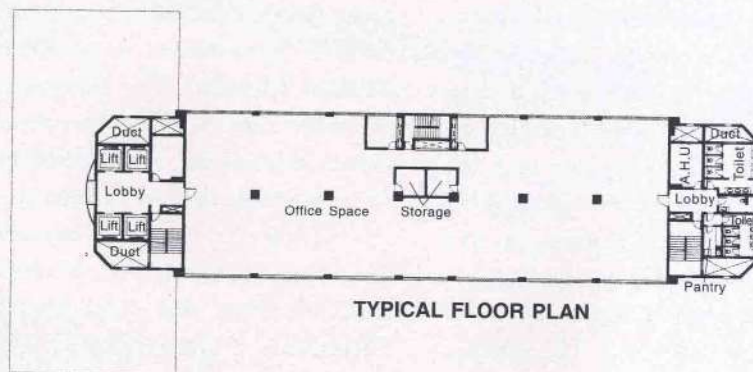
Similar in terms of materials and functional requirements, this project draws parallels from the project at Gurgaon. Ultimately it identifies with a symbolism that is derived from function.



TRANSVERSE SECTIONS



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN



FACTFILE

Project Name:	Citibank Center
Client:	Citibank N A
Location:	MMRDA's Bandra Kurla Complex, Plot No. C-61
Area:	Approximately 100,000sq ft.
Basement for Parking & Vault:	Approximately 50,000sq ft.
Materials Used:	Cladding Glass (Glaverbel make), Aluminium Composite Panels (Alucobond), Granite and Stainless steel
Cost:	Approximately Rs 50 crores
Construction Period:	Approximately 30 months (June 1996-December 1998)
Associate Architect:	Rachana Amin (Senior Associate), Sunil Gambhani
Citi Bank Project Team:	Douglas Hands, S Vaidyanathan, Derek Haveron (FEBC)
Structural Consultant:	R H Mahimtura Consultants Pvt Ltd
Services Consultant:	Eskayem Consultants Pvt Ltd
Contractors:	
Structure - Shell & Core:	Shapoorji Pallonji & Co Ltd
External Cladding & Glazing:	Aluplex India Pvt Ltd
Civil Work finishing:	Jay Art
Carpentry Works:	S J Decorators
Modular Furniture:	Blowplast Ltd
Chairs:	Godrej Featherlite
Ceiling:	Intex Ceiling
Carpets:	Milliken
Air Conditioning:	Voltas
Plumbing:	Nagarwala Engineering Co
Electrical:	Reunion Engineering
Data & Communication Cabling:	CMS
Fire Fighting & Building Management:	Johnson Controls, Monsher Enterprises
Elevators:	Otis Elevator Co (India) Ltd
Security & Access Control:	DATS

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In an attempt for universal recognition, architecture generally relies on a trendy, identifiable vocabulary, which changes with time and not place. No doubt, it creates an image easy to subscribe to, but the result is a building that doesn't fit into a specified climatic locale, a building that fits in everywhere and anywhere. With swiftly vanishing boundaries across the globe, the

workspace reinvents itself with an image more 'Globally' identifiable than 'locally' derived. The projects featured here go on to exemplify the idea spelled out above. Although they present the idea of architecture, assimilated by trends and techniques to create the internationally 'identifiable' picture they still carry the unmistakable stamp of the designer, Hafeez Contractor. ■

20. Looking outwards from the atrium.