



Photograph: Dook.



Photograph: Joao Viegas.



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Exposed: in a beautiful way

by Anthony Tischhauser, Pamboukian lightdesign

South Point Properties' Johannesburg head office is based at 17 Melle Street in Braamfontein. The L-shaped building, which also faces onto Juta Street, huddles the renovated corner block of Garmin Court flats, and an extension to Hotel Lamunu. From the yard space between the two buildings and the full glass façades, South Point is filled with daylight.

Inspired by an approach applied to many industrial buildings during the architectural transformation of the trendy Zona Tortona in Milan, architects Silvio Rech and Lesley Carstens gutted the building, removed the brick and cottage window façade, and stripped it down to its essential concrete support frame. The structure, bare, pure and clean lent itself ideally to an open plan arrangement. The new infrastructure was conceived as layers of services with every system, including the lighting, clearly exposed. The requirement was that each system be well designed and exposed "in a beautiful way".

The three-storey building with accommodation registration on the ground floor, offices on the second and management on the top, now looks over the street

onto Grove Square, another South Point project with the entrance to Hotel Lamunu spilling out onto its tiered surface.

Grove Square was conceived by Rech and Carstens as part of an earlier project, the central public space of the larger South Point development plan. The urban square was created by demolishing an uninspiring little building opposite and by clearing and linking the different remnant spaces behind it. Executed by others, the concept was to open the one time back lanes into pedestrian areas. In this case, they form a central spine parallel to de Korte Street that feeds in and out of the square. Now, opposite the entrance on the defining wall in the background is a huge LED screen.

Paul Pamboukian of Pamboukian lightdesign was responsible for the lighting concept of South Point Central. The designer interpreted the open white glass box building with controlled splodges of 'fun bright' colour furniture by underlining its minimalist feel through a basic rational graphic statement in the choice of a single light source for the general lighting.

The fluorescent tube is applied, in the form of two different shapes, the linear and the circle; the standard 28W open channel tube light and the 40W circline.

The directional linear spacing of the suspended tracks – which impart a sense of perspective – and the rhythmic positioning of the actual light sources are based on photometric calculations. The circline tubes are applied to the walls of the circulation areas in pairs, covered by different coloured vinyl-clad perspex panels which read frontally as stark illustrations or a pop-art element, while from the sides their light-spill illuminates the stairs.

The general cool white light is broken by warm accent light over areas whose specific functions require a more intimate atmosphere. The ground floor in-house client coffee bar has a raft of 60 spun lampshades with 5W CFLs clustered together and suspended at the same height to mirror the plan of the counter. Above the customer relations lounge area on the first floor, a layer of custom-made pendants with oversized glare-free reflectors create their own ceiling, along the lines of traditional pressed ceiling panels. The same pendants with additional 50W downlights illuminate the table of the orange glazed meeting room or 'think space'. These multiples of fittings complement the architectural aesthetic of exposed elements.

Viewed from Grove Square as the glare of daylight makes way for the ambient light of dusk, South Point Central comes into its own as an inviting extension to the square. It displays its sculpted atmospheric guts. The ordered fluorescent tubes give function as speckled accents of white on white to the stacked conceptual floor spaces.



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