



AIA RICHMOND CHAPTER 2007 DESIGN AWARDS MERIT AWARD WINNER

UTC OFFICE WAREHOUSE

Los Altos, California

Architect: Modulus; San Jose, California / Richmond, Virginia

Our client is a company that handles the worldwide acquisition and redistribution of helicopters and parts. They asked our firm to transform an existing 10,000 square foot dingy, abandoned warehouse building into a working environment they could thrive within. One, it was decided, rich with light, space, and shadow.

Our design solution draws its inspiration from the business itself, on two levels. The teaming area is the nucleus of the customer interface. The primacy of this area as the epicenter from which all other functions both radiate and focus, and is the concrete expression of the company's customer-centered business model. The nature of the business itself provided a second unifying concept. The gentle movements and celebration of light and shadow within the space all work to express a sense of delicate suspension, as if hovering in flight.

Both levels are intimately tied together in form and function.

The dichotomous arcs form both a resource library with custom casework for the public teaming area, as well as the screen walls and ramps of the private work areas. The teaming area is located such that it is the focus of all the other service representatives. If any need should arise, all the company's employees are available to assist. While this area is very open, privacy is maintained through another change in elevation that creates an independent zone in the heart of the office. In this area the ceiling is lifted to its highest point and is opened to the sky by an axis of new skylights connecting all the ancillary spaces together. There, the gentle movements between shallow ramps and elevations within the space, the graceful curves and fabric "clouds", the abundant skylights and transparent metal drapery - catch, filter, and celebrate the daylight that dance and dapple the space with light and shadow as the days and seasons progress.

The exterior improvements are implemented with succinct but noticeable touches to the face of the existing structure. A series of awnings and screens, site walls, and carefully placed windows were carried from the interior to the exterior patio and entry, to give expression to the façade, and hint at the inner workings of the space.



The jury had the following comments regarding the project:

“The interior is the strength of this project, characterized by the carefully composed layers of transparency and the care given to the detailing of the space. The plan creates an interesting dynamic that feeds into the detailing. This is an inspiring interior in which every surface is animated. The designer did something great in an industrial space and setting.”



Architect:
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Owner: Universal Technologies Corporation
Structural Engineer: Hohbach-Lewin
Contractor: Novo Construction