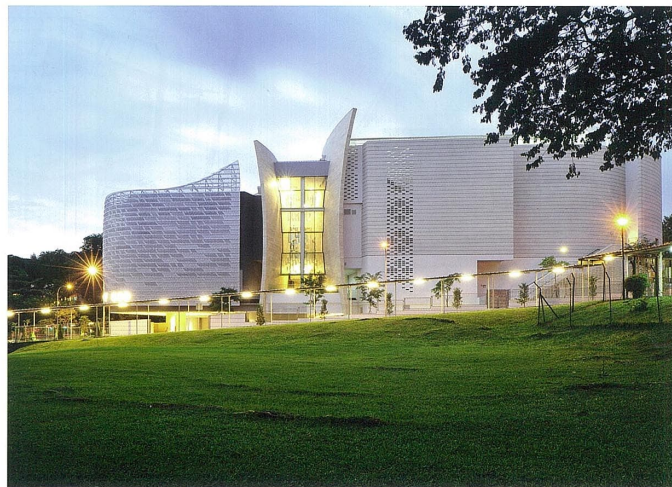




View from Jervois Lane: 'The site is trapezoidal in nature and with existing trees to be conserved. The overall building form responded to the site through its curved nature and avoided harsh geometries so that the building appears more welcoming. View corridors from within the central atrium respond to the existing conserved trees as well as the green lung on the opposite site. The design also carefully considered the visual connection between the church and its surroundings, so that a visual connection is maintained between the street and the activities within the church. At night, the atrium emits a warm glow from within and subtly hints the silhouette of a cross. The overall unique composition and form of the building provides a strong visual icon to the urban scape.' (LAUD Architects)



UP THROUGH AN ATYPICAL ATRIUM

BY CHRIS LOW | IMAGES COURTESY LAUD ARCHITECTS

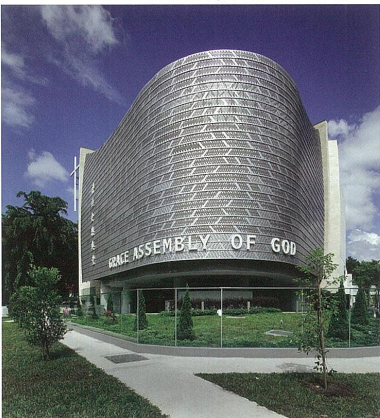
On the shortlist for the 2016 World Architecture Festival awards in the Religion category is LAUD Architects' Grace Assembly of God Church – a four-storey building comprising a 1,500 seat Main Sanctuary, 380-seat Mandarin Hall, 190-seat Children's Hall, a 210-seat Youth Hall, centred around a Central Atrium and topped with prayer rooms and the administrative office. 'The design of the building is an attempt to reinterpret the contemporary protestant church typology in Singapore that is characterised by windowless enclosed worship spaces where the experience of worship is often artificially orchestrated through elaborate audio and visual effects. Increasingly, multi-purpose auditoriums and even cinemas have been used as alternative worship spaces. The design explores the creation of purpose-built reverent spaces through architecture design. Through manipulation of light, spatial volumes and framed views, the design attempted to create sublime spatial qualities that would bring a church goer into a spirit of reverence and worship.' (LAUD Architects) CHRIS LOW visits the building for a first impression.

In a world where there is more than fifty shades of grey, where it's realistic to accept the virtual as real, typologies of space and definition of use have also morphed into a new creature of architecture. One of the most evident emergent especially in a high density city like Singapore is the place of worship.

typo(logical) reorder

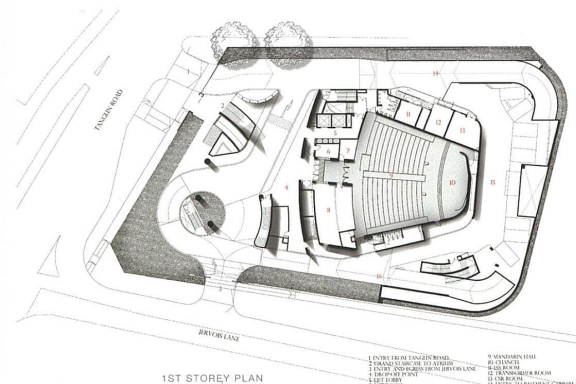
Here at the re-built version of Grace Assembly of God by architectural practice LAUD Architects, where religion is practised, little can be read from street facing front of a very busy Tanglin Road. The idea of celebration is very much a self-contained affair. There is little communication between the building and the site. Entry from street level is succinctly directed into the basements and drive through foyer while church participants are swiftly ushered up a flight of stairs to the second storey and higher levels of sanctuary spaces. Within the site boundaries, the function of arrival and dissemination is compact and exacting. There is no luxury of space to mingle and observe, to see and be seen. All activity is well shield from the noise and views of Tanglin Road. The architectural notion of arrival for a public space has changed.

There seems a disconnection between this public building of worship with the street context. Where built-in space needs to be fully maximised due to the demands of the function, there seems little (space) left to allow architecture to negotiate and exchange pleasantries with the street front. Surely this is a by-product of a high density building within



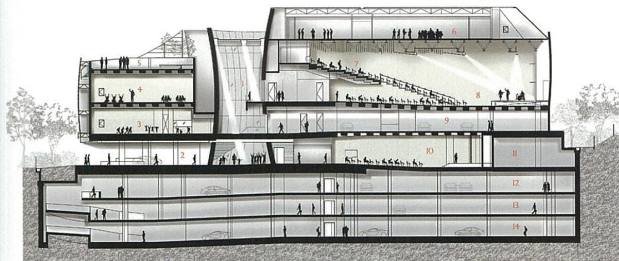
a site constraint. Notwithstanding, it is also the push and pull existence of a religious building that is at once a public building as much as it is a private one, that allows this shift in a church building type (typology of space) which we have grown to expect. Perhaps, as a public building there is no longer a need to overly create public spaces, rather it is to shift its focus onto the congregation within, which relates to the sensitivity of a private building. Here, the design of AOG is centred on movement and communication amongst the people within the space. As a result, this architecture as a public building informs very little of itself from the outside.

The core function of the building is divided into four solid enclosed sanctuaries providing for a growing congregation of 1500, almost three times the original provision. Architecture is pivotal in keeping the congregation together whilst allowing people to move freely and unconsciously throughout the space. There is a constant bipolar logic to the spaces: a push and pull relationship between people arriving and leaving, people collected and people filtered. Even the congregation has been redefined based on different demographic groups, which by traditional was never before. These four sanctuaries are completely enclosed and internalised volumes. They function independently when in progress but the congregation spills over when not, into informal gathering spaces like corridors



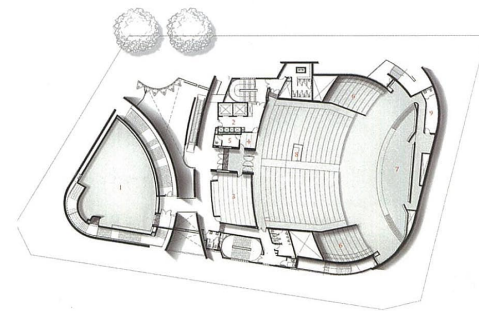
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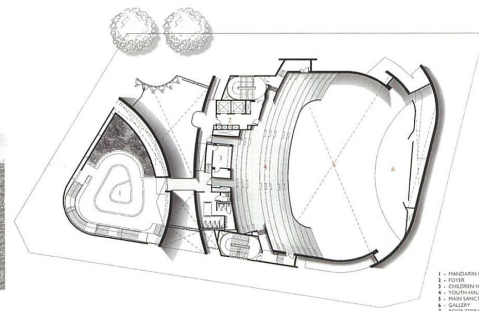
KEY SECTION

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4TH STOREY PLAN

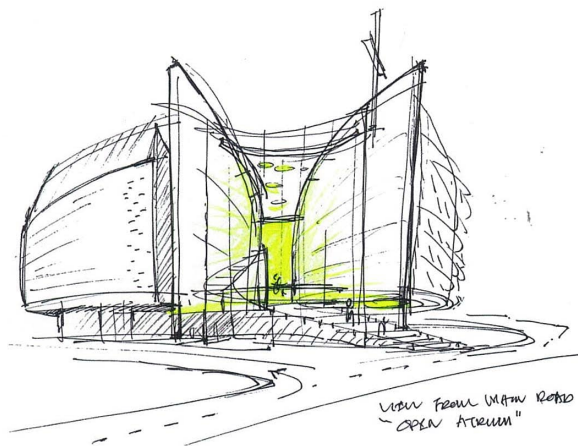
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and open balconies. The sanctuaries are defined functionally as black boxes – no different from performance and theatre spaces; designed and fitted with audio and visual technology that is comparable to entertainment spaces. The definition of sanctuary as a space has evolved beyond any previous known spatial typology. There is no logic, to try and place this form of worship space against that of the traditional church. Perhaps, the definition of sanctuary should be based purely on the literary understanding and less on an architectural one.

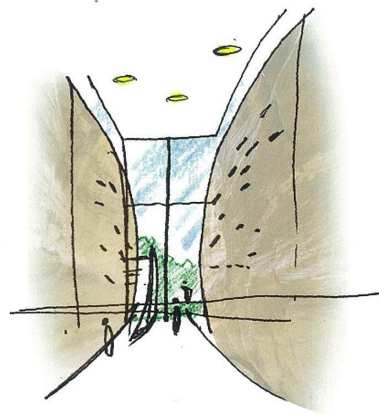
Once within, one has no sense of time or context. The focus of attention and affection is completely offered to the event within these black boxes. It is almost like a suspension of being while being in a space. These windowless solid spaces are defined within 2 sections of a bulbous volume. Facing against each other, the two volumes are enveloped by a four storey high convex wall in a warm natural sand-

GRACE ASSEMBLY OF GOD

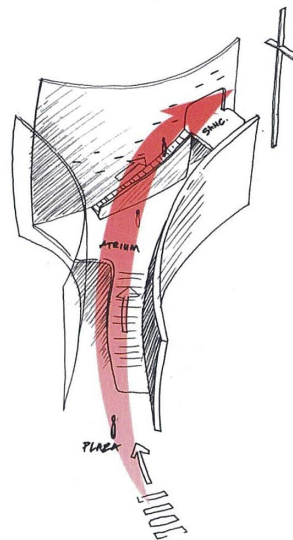
LOCATION	355, TANGLIN ROAD, SINGAPORE
COMPLETION	2015
GFA	5,298.16M ²
SITE AREA	3,784.4M ²
ARCHITECT	HQ TZU YIN/LAUD ARCHITECTS
PROJECT TEAM	JOSEPH LAU, JASON BOK, MELVIN TAN, EUGENE AW, BENJAMIN YEO, TIGRA CHOW, LEE GEOR LAM
BUILDER	GAMMON CONSTRUCTION PTE LTD
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER	LSW CONSULTING ENGINEERS PTE LTD
M&E ENGINEER	BECA CARTER HOLLINGS & FERNER (S.E. ASIA) PTE LTD
QUANTITY SURVEYOR	DAVIS LANGDON KIP (SINGAPORE) PTE LTD
LANDSCAPE	NYEE PHOE FLOWER GARDEN PTE LTD
INTERIORS	ARCHITOLGY INTERIORS PTE LTD



Design concept sketch - view from main road of open atrium



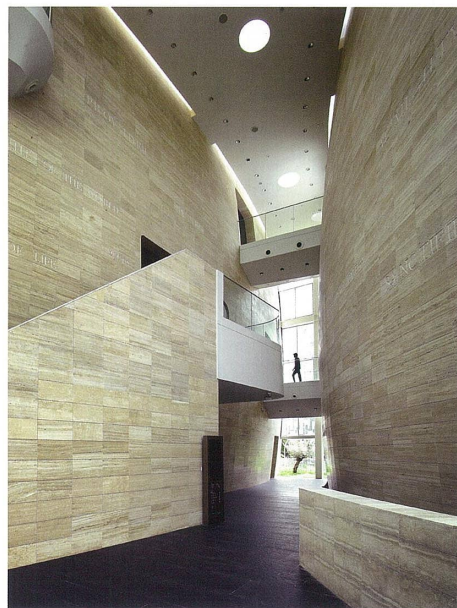
Design concept sketch of open atrium



Main Sanctuary



Children's Hall



A welcoming central atrium, 'conceived as the hub of the church, drawing people in from the street through a gently sweeping main staircase. Worshippers have to traverse this Atrium before entering the worship halls. Inspiration [to design this space] was drawn from Petra, an ancient archaeological site in Jordan famous for its towering rock formations. A pair of high volume double-curved walls clad in stone, rising up high on two sides, allow shafts of light to cast onto the floor below to create a space inspiring the awesomeness of God.' (LAUD Architects)

stone like finish. This warm tone is a distinct contrast to the otherwise cold space that offers no respite in openings between exterior and interior.

Sandwiched between the two solid volumes is an equally voluminous void that counters the weight of the heavy stone walls. This void is the only link of communication between the architecture and the external environment. From the void, light filters and flood the chasm between the two stone walls. Natural elements of nature like wind and rain can be enjoyed and experienced when within the void. There is an interesting conceptual contrast in the void: where as one stands within 'nothingness', one is actually acutely aware of the environment. This is the reverse for the sanctuary space: in a space completely defined, one is rendered completely unaware. Here again, is the re-ordering of spaces and its typology.

As much as the void is empty, its sheer emptiness defines an almost compressive space, if not for the inclusion of horizontal links and bridges riding across the void, connecting from across the two stone walls. At once, the links and bridges bring to life the much needed communication between the sanctuary spaces hidden behind the stone walls. Here the tall vertical solid walls are broken down into human scale by the corridors and bridges. The physical relationship between scale and volume is a well-employed strategy if it was meant to illustrate the relationship between God and man. Grace Assembly of God is a building of its time. Places of worship are loosely defined typologies and churches, are no longer typical. +