

hallucinate design office and interdesign associates

Maike Group, Xi'an, China



Visions of Silk Road expeditions and terra-cotta warriors, guarding ancient dynasties, are conjured by the mention of Xi'an. Today, the city serves as a gateway to China's vast interior. For the metals giant Maike Group, Xi'an International Trade and Logistics Park therefore presented the perfect place for a trading and operations center. Interdesign principal Tsutomu Kamo won the commission for a pair of mega-buildings, one sprouting three towers and the other two, while the job of handling the 3.5 million square feet inside went to Hallucinate founder and creative director Wang Wenliang.

In the smaller building's skylit atrium, crisscrossing staircases with blackened-steel balustrades form an X, as in Xi'an. "The X floats," Kamo says. But that's where local references end. Wang's favorite part of the project is the innovative enclosure that towers over a lobby, presenting horizontal bands of spray-painted extruded-aluminum slats across which move ghostly numbers: date, time, and stock-market data. He describes the design as "bold and surprising yet functional and practical." Curving forms recur, from the lobby to the trading floors, where the desks are C shapes carved from solid-surfacing. In contrast to the drama of the architecture, he exercised reserve when it came to the color scheme. It's black-and-white, dominated by white. —Rebecca Lo



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