

# MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A Corporate Newsletter of Hunter Douglas Singapore

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## HIGHLIGHTS

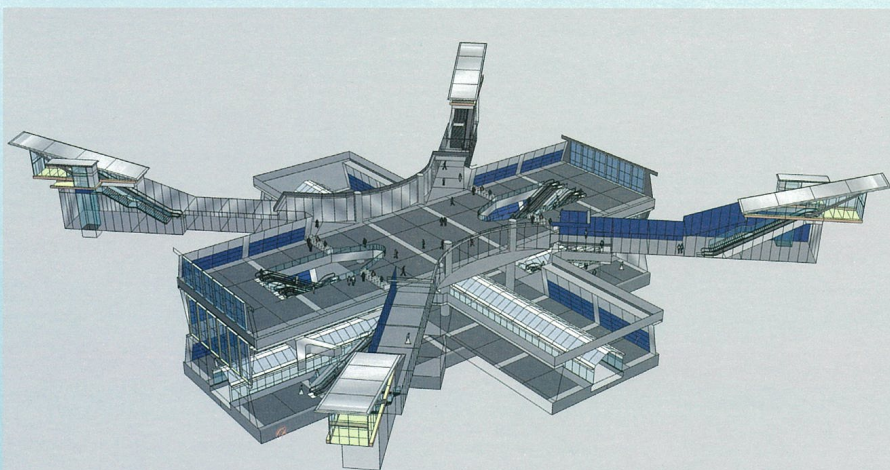
- **NUS - Hunter Douglas Award for the Innovative Use of Technology**
- **GreenhillLi - Creating Delightful and Uplifting Spaces**
- **A Helping Hand - Community Service at Asian Women's Welfare Association**
- **'Hunt For Honour' - An Outdoor Team Building Exercise in Batam**



## Hunter Douglas - Innovation Never Stops



## GreenhillLi - Creating Delightful and Uplifting Spaces



Burjuman Interchange Station on the Rede and Green Line, Dubai UAE  
A complex 3-level cruciform interchange of a cross-alignment configuration with entrances at 4 corners of a major road intersection – GreenhillLi configured the public circulation to enable subterranean multiple pedestrian crossings integrated with the station.



When Nigel Greenhill and Li Sau Kei returned to Singapore from Australia at the start of 2005 after completing the design of 2 train stations in Perth CBD, they had one purpose in mind – to start an architectural practice in Singapore. With no work, no resources and no office, but with extensive experience in large-scale projects and transit design under their belt, they

founded GreenhillLi. A few months later, they secured work on the Dubai Light Rail Transit project, which was a new mass rapid transit system comprising of 23 over ground & 4 underground stations. It was achieved through the demonstration of their design capability to the client, and by putting together a core team of experienced transit designers to service the project, GreenhillLi grew to a strength of seven senior architects overnight.

“We were sub-consultants to Llewellyn Davies Yeang, a large UK-based architectural practice. We provided the transit expertise and focused on the underground stations, which were technically more challenging and each was unique. Our team was fully capable of meeting the project challenges, but handling a Dubai government client who were procuring a new transit system for the first time and not quite prepared for the challenge yet was another issue.”

Six years later, the company has evolved into a fully-registered architectural practice with a wide-ranging international body of work including commercial, public, transit and heritage buildings located in Singapore; the middle-east countries of UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar; the Australian cities of Perth, Brisbane and Sydney; and Nigeria in North Africa. But it wasn't without teething and growing problems, as the 2 directors Nigel and Sau Kei recall. After their work stopped on the Dubai LRT, there was a lengthy lean period during the economic downturn in Singapore.

“It was difficult to secure work as we were a new company albeit with experienced architects. Clients wanted practices with relevant track record and a practice can only achieve that if it is given the work. This was the difference between our practice and new practices with parent companies overseas. We as individuals may have had the relevant past experience, but not in the capacity of our company, whereas the latter's local representatives might not

have had the experience, but could claim that the parent company overseas did.

We also found that with the kind of work we were pursuing, we were competing against 'big name' practices, especially in Singapore. Clients often have a view that it is a risk to take on small or 'young' practices on large projects, but we persisted with the conviction that what matters are the individuals and the importance of producing the highest level of architecture possible, and servicing the projects and clients well.

That quiet period proved fortuitous in that it gave us the time and opportunity to evolve our company philosophy, working practices and standards, based on our own professional and ethical principles. Part of this was carrying out a lot of research and experimental work, sometimes during architectural competitions. When the work steadily picked up, we knew what we wanted to achieve and how to go about it.”



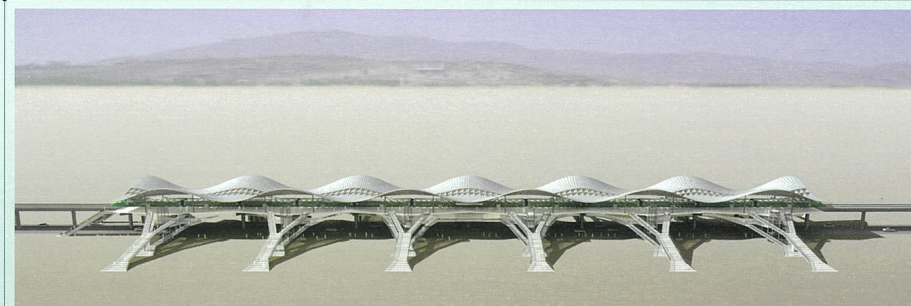
Southbank residential development, Stellenbosch, South Africa  
A series of interlocking cylindrical modules integrated into hilly terrain create different unit sizes and courtyards. Substantial environmental modelling was carried out to develop facades, internal and external spaces. In addition, solar, wind and rainwater harnessing, water recycling and pre-fabrication systems were devised.





Al Shoail Plaza, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

A 25-storey office tower with massing and architectural form that responds to climate and solar orientation. Shading and solar gain studies were undertaken early on in the concept design to minimise solar impact. This led to an asymmetrical 'side-core' design with south-facing service core located at the rear of the site to minimise heat gain and maximise sun-shading to habitable areas.



Al Masha'ar Al Mugaddasaah Metro Southern Line, Mecca, Saudi Arabia

A design generated from unique crowd management circulation patterns and a response to the natural terrain and climatic context.

Nigel and Sau Kei admit to having an environmental sustainability conscience that permeates to their work and office management. Everyone in the practice takes public transport, everything recyclable is recycled in the office, usually no artificial lighting is used during the day, and all other possible means of energy conservation is employed. GreenhillLi has an intrinsic sustainable approach to their architecture. This is primarily passive design, as they believe that a building must have the right fundamentals established from the start so that everything that develops from these principles will work for instead of against the design. As such, active ESD is not used as a mitigation measure nor an 'add-on' to meet scoring criteria, but rather as further design enhancement.

GreenhillLi's expertise in and pursuit of mass rapid transit design stems from their sustainability agenda. A well-planned and sustainable city gives precedence to good public transport systems and pedestrian network over vehicles and roads. Their station architecture provides legibility and ease of use for commuters, and creates new landmarks and focus for the community in the urban environment.

The conservation projects are also part of GreenhillLi's sustainable approach to architecture, specifically to extend the shelf life of buildings. The practice's view of building conservation is not limited to heritage buildings, but also about conserving available building stock, and the associated resources and energy. Buildings should be designed for long life spans and adaptive re-use.

Their architecture also reflects strong geometry and form, but this is derived from rationality of three-

dimensional function and engineering, which are considered integral to the architecture they pursue.



Red House @ the Quayside, Singapore. BCI Green Design Award 2010 Citation

ESD approach includes the employment of low-energy ventilation and lighting; and recycled and re-cyclable building materials, finishes and furniture.

(Photograph courtesy of Patrick Bingham-Hall)



Yew Tee Square, Singapore. SIA - Hunter Douglas Merit Award 2010

A new insertion to an existing shopping centre considered solar shading as the key generator of the architecture. The idea of using a standard proprietary product and creating a unique sculptural design from its repetition was realised through analysis of function, environment and the desire to create a much-needed focal point for the area.

(Photograph courtesy of Daniel Beh)



All the qualities of their architecture work towards the end goal of place making and creating 'delightful and uplifting spaces for people'.

"Our architecture is not 'popular' as it does not subscribe to trends or 'isms'. It is not derived out of form-making as an end in itself. For some time now we have been of the view that our work was not understood fully, and we tended to think it did not cater towards competition-winning architecture, which quite often has to 'grab' the judges attention with bold or even spectacular gestures, but which after post-rationalisation and budget scrutiny, becomes rather watered-down. 'In a funny sort of way, even though we are progressive thinkers and we employ a lot of technology as a tool, we see our selves as being rooted in the 'traditions' of architecture, and the timeless qualities of light, space and character."

But this perception seems to be changing as during the course of this year, GreenhillLi has won recognition through awards for their work.

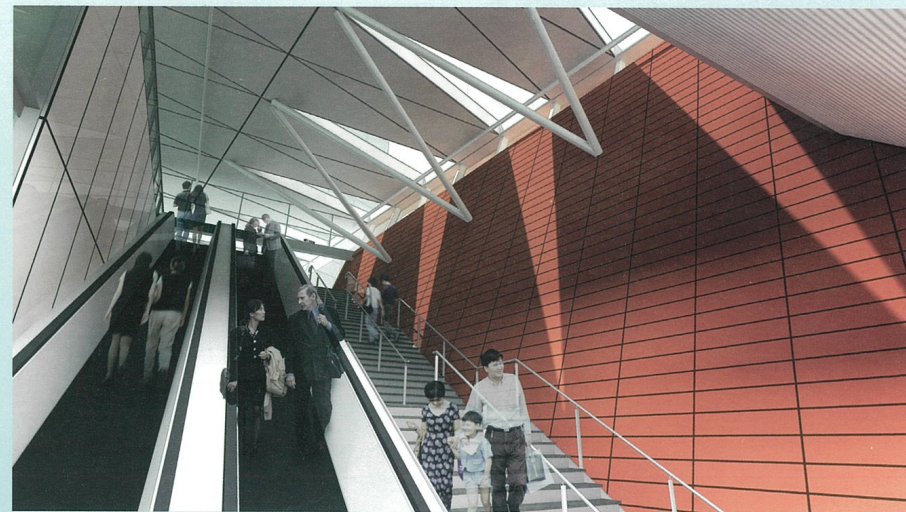
Looking ahead to the future, GreenhillLi is nurturing their two new Downtown Line MRT interchange stations in Singapore to completion in 2016 while keeping a healthy mix of other conservation, commercial, master planning, and public building projects.

"Stations have a very long gestation period in Singapore because of the engineering complexity of the entire system. As architects, it's a real test of our patience and resilience as we are keen to achieve the end product and see the fruit of our labour in the enjoyment of the users. Also, we have to always consider design in the most progressive way and challenge current conventions as they may be out-dated by the time the stations open. We are very glad that the client recognises our expertise and puts their trust in our practice, which is possibly the smallest in Singapore entrusted with such large public projects."



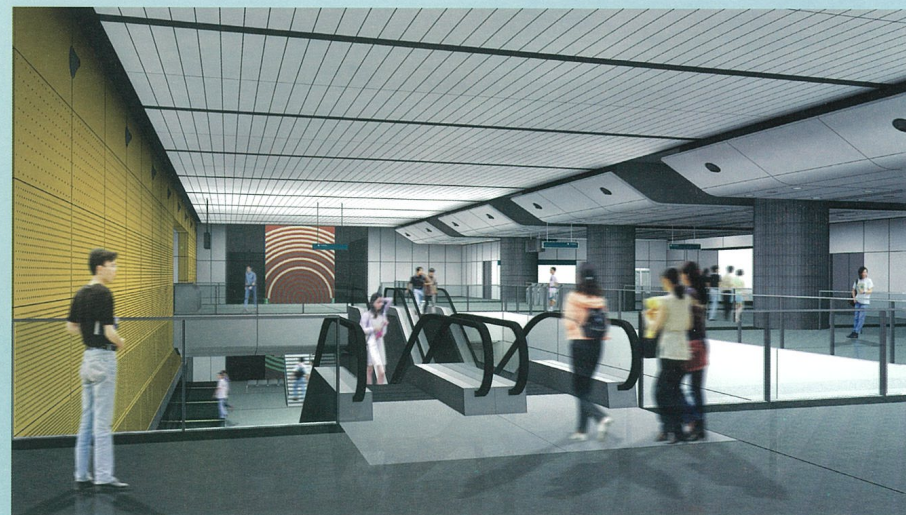
67 Tras Street, Singapore

A dilapidated stratified shophouse is completely transformed for office adaptive re-use with spatial connectivity over 3 levels. The design reinterprets and emphasises all existing conserved elements while inserting complementary new elements to create an integrated whole.  
(Photograph courtesy of Patrick Bingham-Hall)



Interchange Station Downtown Line 3, Singapore

Entrances incorporate daylight, expressed structure and material colour/texture into the architecture. The legibility of the station public areas start from the unique landmark entrances to the bold and distinctive station hall and platform.



Interchange Station Downtown Line 3, Singapore

Public spaces with clear planning and circulation incorporate expressed services zones and bold colour/feature walls – all confidently integrated to provide a unique architectural identity for the station.

In the last six years, GreenhillLi has firmly established itself as a practice of relevance based on a creative design process and rigorous technical expertise rooted

in environmentally sustainable practice. Indeed, it is well-poised to contribute significantly to the architectural scene not only locally but internationally as well.