

ARCHITECTURE • INTERIOR DESIGN • LANDSCAPING • M.E.P. SYSTEMS

May / June 2026

SEAB

SOUTHEAST ASIA BUILDING



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ISSN 2345-7066





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ISSN 2345-7074 (E-periodical)

Trade Link Media Pte Ltd also publishes:

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- Lighting Today
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- Southeast Asia Construction

SOUTHEAST ASIA BUILDING is published bi-monthly by:

Trade Link Media Pte Ltd, 1 Paya Lebar Link, #04-01, Paya Lebar Quarter 1 (PLQ 1), Singapore 408533
Tel: +65 6842 2580
Editorial e-mail: seab@tradelinkmedia.com.sg
Website: www.tradelinkmedia.com.sg
Co. Reg. no: 199204277K

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groupDCA Studio, Gurugram



Harnessing the Simplicity of Nature to Cultivate Joy and Productivity

Celebrating a new chapter in its 27th year of fostering design legacies, groupDCA Studio is a quiet, peaceful retreat located on the border of Gurugram, Delhi. Developed to nurture the team's creativity in nature's embrace, the space exemplifies the studio's core values of promoting eco-conscious design solutions that utilise locally sourced materials, paying homage to traditional craftsmanship.





Untouched by urbanisation in the Gwal Pahari area, the verdant 19046 sq ft property is a respite from the chaos of the city and is conveniently accessible from both Delhi and Gurgaon. The design adopts a fragmented scheme with smaller, distinct blocks with an outward-looking approach, each crafted with a unique character and function. This layout weaves through the landscape, creating a journey of exploration and a sequence of experiential spaces that meld into the surroundings.

The layout comprises four varying rectangular blocks that house the reception area, meeting rooms, workstations, principal offices, administrative department, cafeteria, etc. Intertwined with lush lawns and shaded under dense trees, the studio embodies an optimistic setting that promotes the team's passion for design and spirit of collaboration.

All the blocks respond to the principles of climatology and Vastu. Oriented along the east-west axis, the blocks are constructed with dressed rubble masonry to shield the interiors from the harsh sunlight. The north-facing walls are porous and adorn large, glazed windows that open onto the shaded verandahs; the southern walls have small fenestrations that



modulate heat and glare. These design strategies ensure the studio is unaffected by the scorching summers while welcoming the gentle winter sun, furnishing the space with diffused natural light that promotes clear thinking and frames refreshing views.

Along with the well-insulated roofs, walls, and surrounding greens, the studio embraces the simplicity of nature to cultivate a serene workspace.

A winding entrance leads to the reception block, connected to two meeting rooms. The humble scale and intimate heights establish an immediate, welcoming connection with visitors, creating an illusion of a small studio space. The second block accommodates administrative functions, a materials studio, a staff cafeteria, a stationery store, an

accounting office, and a pantry near the reception.

The principal cabins are a separate entity, visually connected to the studio and the ecstatic outdoors. There is a multi-purpose lounge that forms a buffer between the principal offices. This space is where meetings and brainstorming sessions happen; it can even host friends and entertainment. This thoughtful design strategy allows discussions to extend into the principal's cabin, providing the team autonomy.

The fourth block—the largest of all—houses the workstations adjacent to a presentation room for client meetings. Basking in the quiet rear end of the site, the studio block spills into the outdoors on one side, with an overhang that shades the glazed facade and creates a buffer, perfect for brainstorming, some alone time, or

a cup of coffee during the rain. Small shading devices on the opposite facade cut the harsh sun and filter in fresh air.

The design approach stimulates creativity through a sensory interplay of sight, sound, touch, and smell. The layout is fragmented and connected through unbuilt, open spaces with inherited trees and organic pathways, promoting convenience and physical well-being. As team members move between the studio, cafeteria, and washrooms, they encounter enriching glimpses of the outdoors, the crunch of gravel underfoot, and unplanned interactions with colleagues. The dynamic use of light and shadow during the day introduces varying degrees of shading in shared spaces and spillouts, while at night, the dense foliage casts intriguing shadows that lend an air of mystery,



creating quiet, secluded areas for reflection.

The structure encourages movement, offering breaks from the constraints of desk work. Shaded spaces provide shelter yet maintain a sense of openness, allowing employees to engage with nature throughout the seasons. Each space spills into a common area, perfect for hosting gatherings of clients, artists, and industry experts, embodying the firm's commitment to contextual relevance and social responsibility.

The material palette was sourced within a 200–250 km radius of the site, reducing carbon emissions incurred during transportation. The simple, low-rise blocks feature dressed rubble stone masonry walls that seamlessly blend with the natural surroundings. The thatched roof, a part of northern India's design vocabulary, is integrated into the studio block's morphology by local artisans and helps maintain comfortable internal temperatures. Terracotta brick flooring enhances the connection to the natural setting and also cools down the space, working on the same principle as an earthen pot when sprinkled with water. It forms a harmonious composition with the loose gravel, or Bajri, and green lawns enable water percolation to maintain groundwater levels. Aero concrete panels, which interlock and allow quick on-site assembly, are expressed in their raw grey texture and contribute to the scheme's frugal palette.

With a tapestry of textures and memorabilia, the interiors reflect the workspace's reigning theme of simplicity and celebration of Indian heritage. Repurposed from the previous office, each collectable carries the essence of the practice and nostalgia into the new workspace.

Ornately carved wooden columns sourced from a demolished Mangalore house support the principal cabin's roof at the entrance, emulating a traditional home's verandah. Eighty-year-old blue-coloured British lights cast a subdued glow in the space. The central table in the room is composed of a combination of century-old doors from various Mangalore homes with diverse patinas, resulting in an object rich in texture and colour. Even the table in the principal office is left raw, reflecting the old charm from the firm's inception.

The pre-existing trees were left untouched, and the blocks were planned around them. Raised circular seating was constructed to protect the tree roots, serving as a breakout space where users can unwind under the shade of the canopies. A few iconic plants, like the hibiscus, bougainvillea, and ficus creepers from the old office, were also transplanted onto the site, a sustainable and nostalgic reminder of the fond memories of the old studio.

groupDCA Studio is a workspace developed in tandem with the allure of nature, fostering innovation and nurturing creativity. It is the culmination of the firm's journey, mirroring its design process of honouring slow craftsmanship and heritage to create spaces that endure and are responsive to the climate. The workspace unfolds as an experiential journey that cultivates a conducive environment for the physical and mental well-being of users, where each corner instills a sense of discovery, delight, and contentment.



› PROJECT DETAILS

Location: Gurugram, Haryana

Area: 19046 sq ft

Height of the blocks: 3540 mm

Design Team: Amit Aurora, Rahul Bansal

Photography: Nivedita Gupta

Videography: Avesh Gaur

Completion: December 2023