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DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

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## IDEAS LAB

X+LIVING

## STRAITS CLAN

TAKENOUCHI WEBB

## THE DATAI

LANGKAWI

DL2A

## ROOM

## WITHOUT ROOF

HYLA ARCHITECTS

## TECHNOLOGY IN ARCHITECTURE

TIME TO PLAY CATCH UP



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/ WORDS MICHELE KOH MOROLLO

# TOMORROWLAND

Influenced by the Industrial Revolution and Information Age, this mixed-use space in Shanghai brings an IT-shaped future world into the present.

Chinese firm Powerlong Group recently opened Ideas Lab – a shopping, research, office and exhibition space in Shanghai, where their customers can come to experience the future of unmanned electronic retail.

The Group, whose business interests include real estate, industry, information, hospitality, culture, and the arts, hired renowned architect Li Xiang and her team at X+Living to create a bold, mixed-use hub that would better connect the company with the public, while serving as a metaphor for the Age of Technology.

Housed within Powerlong Commercial Centre – a roughcast, standalone, commercial building in Shanghai’s Minhang district – the 1,100m<sup>2</sup> space was developed into a two-level hub for both the company’s employees, and the public.

Powerlong researchers and office staff work, interact, and share ideas with each

other on the upper level, while visitors can walk around the lower level to experience a purely electronic retail environment.

According to Li, the design for the Lab was informed by themes from the Industrial Revolution and the Information Age.

The goal was to physically manifest the zeitgeist of our IT age, and to provide an incubator and community hub where people can exchange ideas and experience first-hand the future of IT.

On the first floor is a café, meeting spaces and six “reaction tanks” or “experience buckets” – semi-enclosed shop spaces that Powerlong leases to different vendors. Each functions as a retail space where visitors can view and purchase the vendor’s products and services.

Here, rather than paying with cash or credit cards, visitors scan a QR code and pay using only their mobile phones.

The curved outlines of the reaction

tanks are repeated throughout the Lab in the form of arched thresholds and windows, spiral staircases and circular seats, creating a futuristic atmosphere that brings to mind sets from sci-fi movies such as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* or *Gattaca*.

Located on the second floor are the workspaces, which accommodate 150 employees from various departments.

Li designed one of the sections on this floor in the form of six flower petals to soften the industrial feel of the interiors.

She created a pink, capsule-shaped structure, constructed onsite with glass fibre-reinforced gypsum.

Forms and structures commonly seen in factories such as elevated metal catwalks, massive tanks, and utility pipes were incorporated into the design of the passageways and staircases.

Ornate metalwork along the staircase, walkways and partitions, along with whimsical metal lamps add a subtle gothic feel to the concept.

"We used factories of the Age of Steam as our prototype, but cut off the complex parts, and kept only the most basic functional parts, such as reaction tanks, energy transmission pipelines, and raised platforms that engineers use," says Li.



The walls and floors are made of self-leveling concrete and painted in cement-coloured art paint. Wooden boards, painted white, were used for the floors.

Metal fittings were used throughout, and pipe-like structures conceal the air-conditioning units, electrical wires and cables.

The clean white-and-grey colour scheme is enlivened with pops of pastel pink, which add a sense of fun and cheerfulness to the calm and futuristic space.

All the furniture, including engraved solid wood stools in the café area, were custom-designed by X+Living.

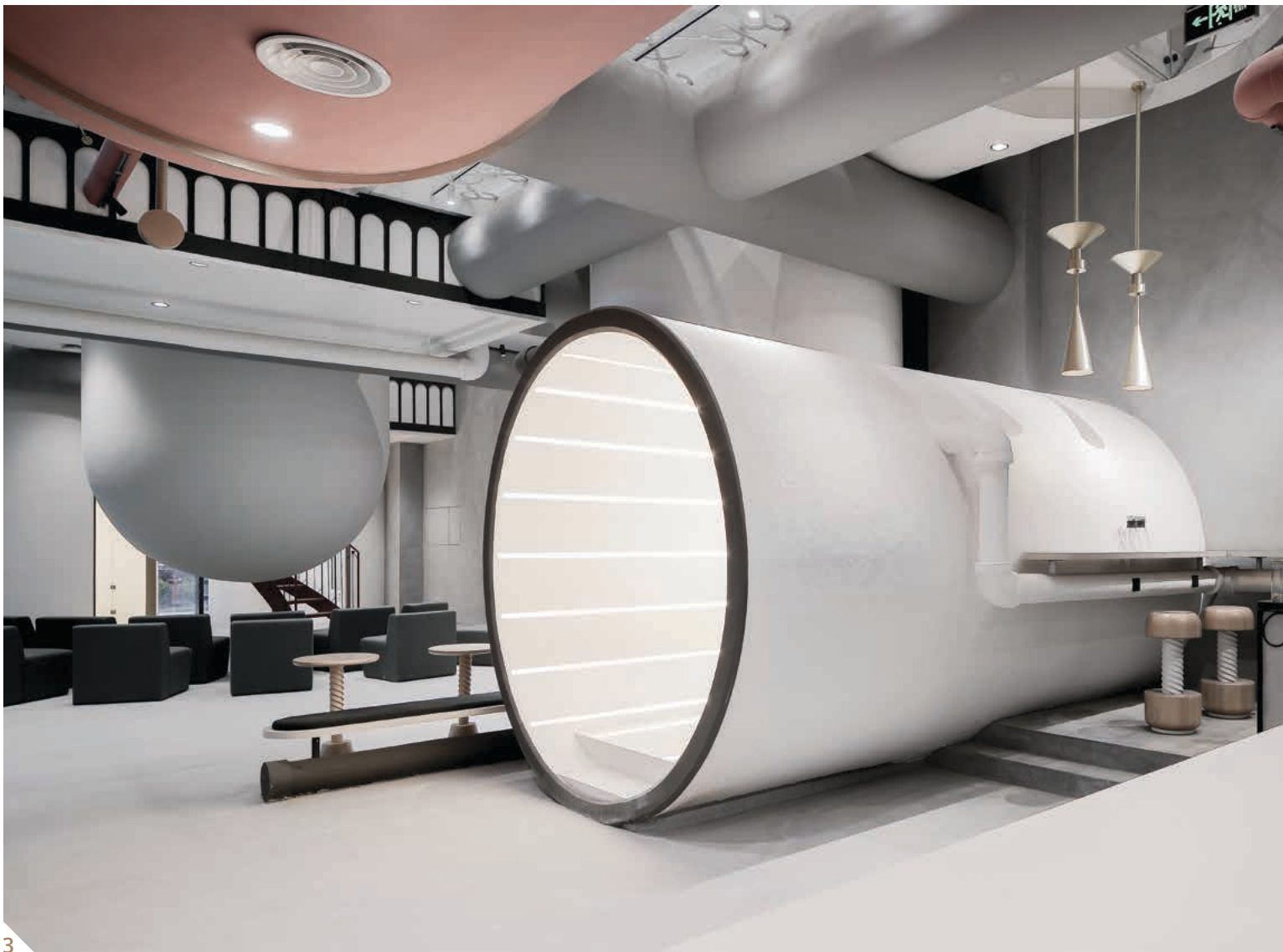
/ 1  
A pink spiral staircase accents an otherwise white-and-grey palette, leading up from the public area on the first level to the work spaces on the upper level.

/ 2  
Offices for Powerlong staff are located on the upper level. The walls and floors are made of self-leveling concrete and painted in cement coloured art paint.

/ 3  
A large pipe-like tunnel structure serves as a walkway on the first level, inspired by factories of the Age of Steam.

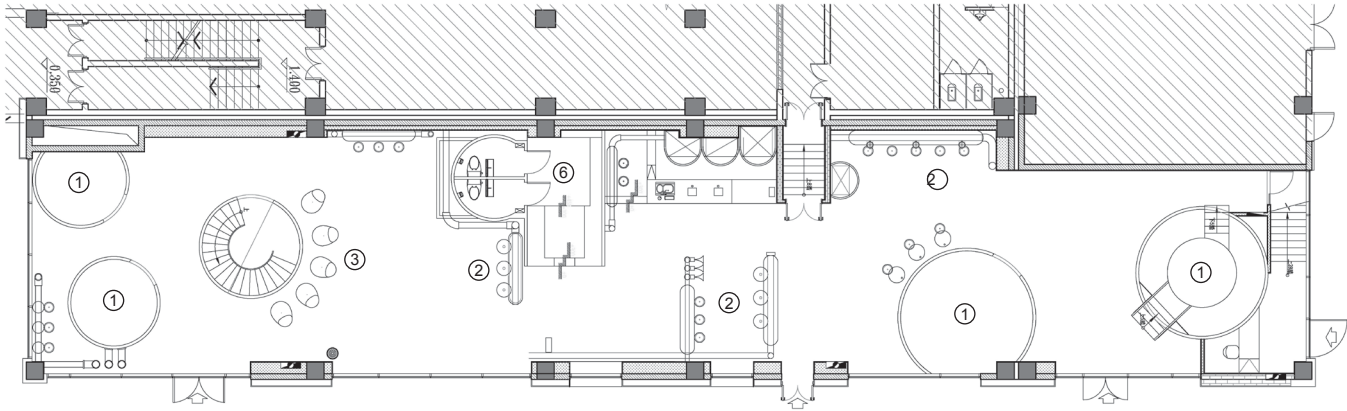


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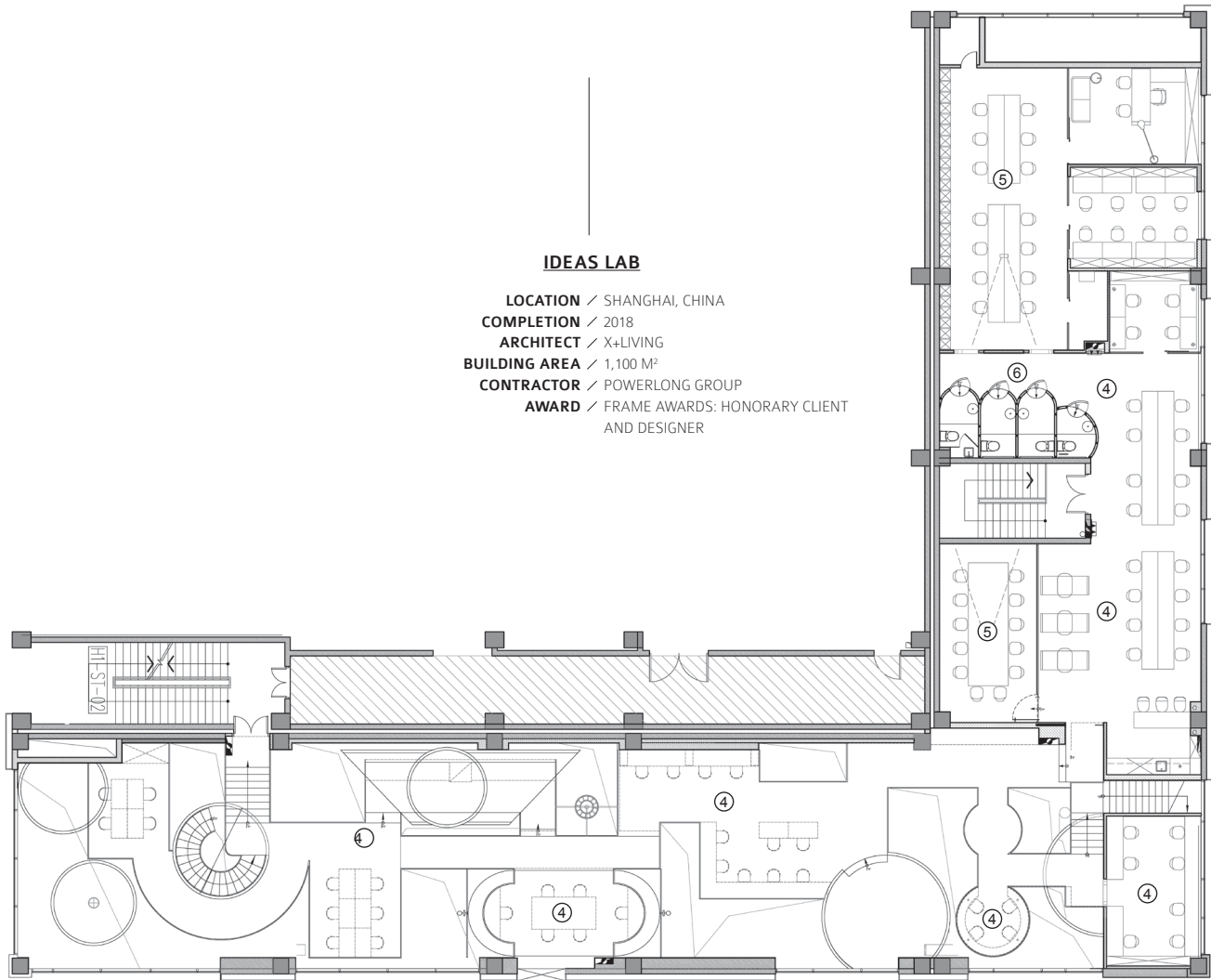
FLOOR PLANS



FIRST FLOOR

IDEAS LAB

LOCATION / SHANGHAI, CHINA  
COMPLETION / 2018  
ARCHITECT / X+LIVING  
BUILDING AREA / 1,100 M<sup>2</sup>  
CONTRACTOR / POWERLONG GROUP  
AWARD / FRAME AWARDS: HONORARY CLIENT AND DESIGNER



SECOND FLOOR

① EXPERIENCE AREA

② COFFEE

③ SHARING MEETING AREA

④ WORKING AREA

⑤ MEETING AREA

⑥ WASHROOM



**/ 4**  
Curved outlines are repeated throughout the Lab's double-height space.

**/ 5**  
Arched thresholds add a softness to the industrial style interiors.

"The biggest challenge with this project was dismantling all the existing floors on the upper level of the original space. We needed to use advance technology to reinforce the girders and dismantle auxiliary girders in order to make the vertical space look more spacious," says Li, who hopes that the Lab conveys both a spirit of innovation, and a sense of efficiency.

"The clean and cool concrete depicts the concise and efficient character of the space. Through the vertical generatrix and sight lines, I created a multi-functional composite office and commercial model that R&D staff can work in, and the public can use, and enjoy as a work of art," she adds.

By combining large, heavy-duty, factory elements with light pink, and artistic, sculptural forms, Li has succeeded in bringing the world of tomorrow into today.

