

CONCERN FOR HUMANITY EXPRESSED IN BRICK

THE DEFTNESS OF ITS ARCHITECTURE ALLOWS WAP ART SPACE, A SPECTACULAR NEW BUILDING IN SEOUL, TO COMMUNICATE ON BOTH HUMAN AND URBAN LEVELS.

As an architect, how do you bring back human scale and perspective in a hyper-modern metropolis like Seoul, a city where architecture and life epitomise globalisation, digitalisation, advanced infrastructure and rampant commercialism, as reflected in the many skyscrapers, whose scale rarely relates to the human sensory apparatus? How do you bring them back while simultaneously reaching out and engaging the urban and cultural context in a fresh new dialogue?

Considerations like these held the key for the Swiss architect Davide Macullo when a private client commissioned him to design WAP Art Space, a combined art gallery and private home in Seoul's Gangnam District.

He started by opting for a human scale and easily recognisable geometry in the form of a cubic grid of 2 x 2 metres. To achieve the desired volumes, the measurements are increased to six, eight and ten metres, with the largest making it possible to have bigger rooms and relate to the scale of the city.

WAP Art Space consists of staggered cube-like blocks in various sizes that look as if they have just been stacked haphazardly. Arranging them in this way highlights the cubic format spectacularly and also leaves room for windows and terraces. The building has two floors below ground level. Above ground, six storeys are stacked on top of one another. The amount of floor space diminishes gradually, making it look slimmer at the top. The sides of the cubes alternate between forming walls and windows, several of which span double-height rooms.

The gallery, which is devoted to contemporary art, has six exhibition halls and an outdoor exhibition yard. It is located on the ground floor and the first floor below ground. Its semi-public status makes the gallery a social and cultural gesture, an invitation to the city and its users.

The private home has a lobby on the ground floor and extends over the five upper floors, away from the public area to ensure an undisturbed domestic space.

The building is made of concrete cast in situ with façades of brick, which as well as being a traditional building material in Korea, also helps create a human quality.

To achieve just the right look for the façades, Macullo wanted a light-coloured brick. It also had to be hand-made because their artisanal nature is what endows bricks with their unique qualities. The client found the right brick on a visit to the Kolumba Museum in Cologne, which was designed by the architect Peter Zumthor. A version of the long, slender Kolumba in a very light colour was just what was needed.

Macullo explains what it is that the Kolumba bricks add to WAP Art Space in the book *Architectural Material 1 - Brick & Tile*, by Korean Dandi Publishing: "The bricks are like a piece of silk fabric that you wear and give the feeling of keeping the body warm or cool. The effect of bricks on the elevations of a building is connected to the reduction of scale: from a distance, the building looks homogeneous, but closer up I can distinguish

the characteristics of the cladding material. This difference holds my attention as I approach and reduces the scale from urban to domestic, from public to private. The closer I get, the more it touches me. Brick has extraordinary potential to express manual work. It is like seeing a fabric woven by hand instead of by machine. It is alive and expresses concern for humanity."

These delicate qualities are also present in the lobby of the private home, where the Kolumba-clad façade is drawn into the building as vibrant, tactile surfaces on the interior walls.

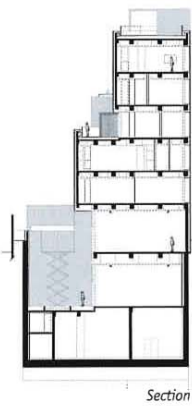
WAP Art Space, Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
 Client: Private
 Architect: Davide Macullo Architects
 Contractor: Dasan Construction & Engineering Co., Ltd
 Engineer: Dasan Construction & Engineering Co., Ltd
 Completed: 2017
 Brick: K11
 Text: Tina Jarstian, MSc Architecture
 Photographer: Yousub Song

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 Davide Macullo, architect

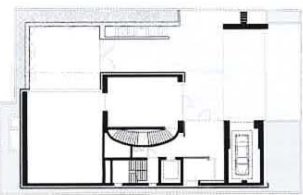
The building, which houses the WAP Art Space, consists of stacked, cube-like blocks of different sizes. The blocks are offset from each other, which creates space for window openings and terraces.

The stacked cubes are a dramatic addition to the streetscape.

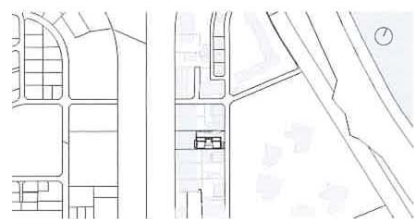
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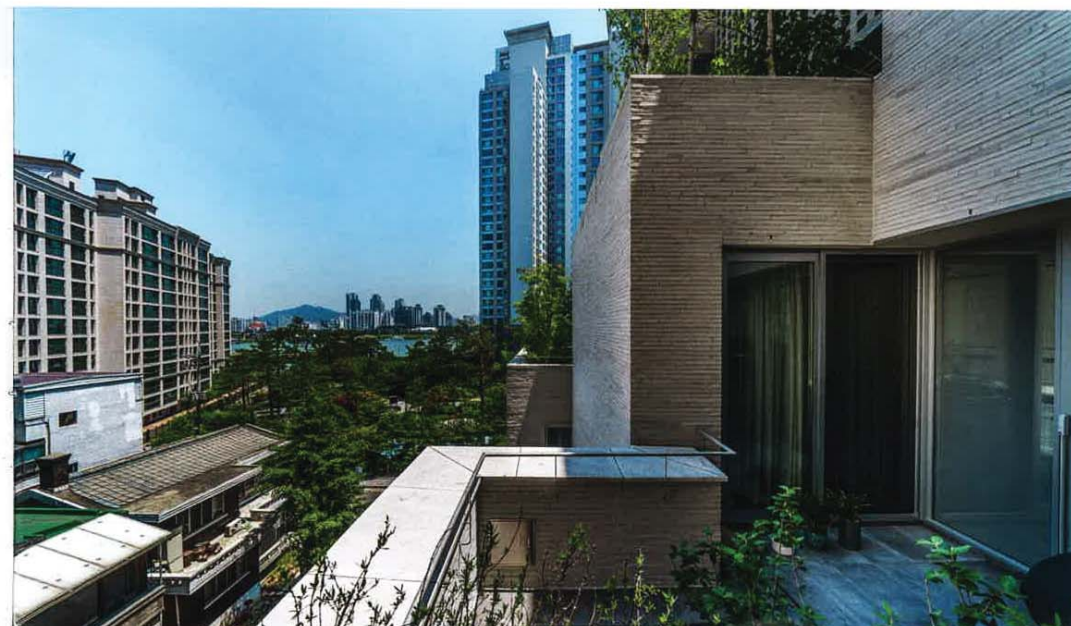
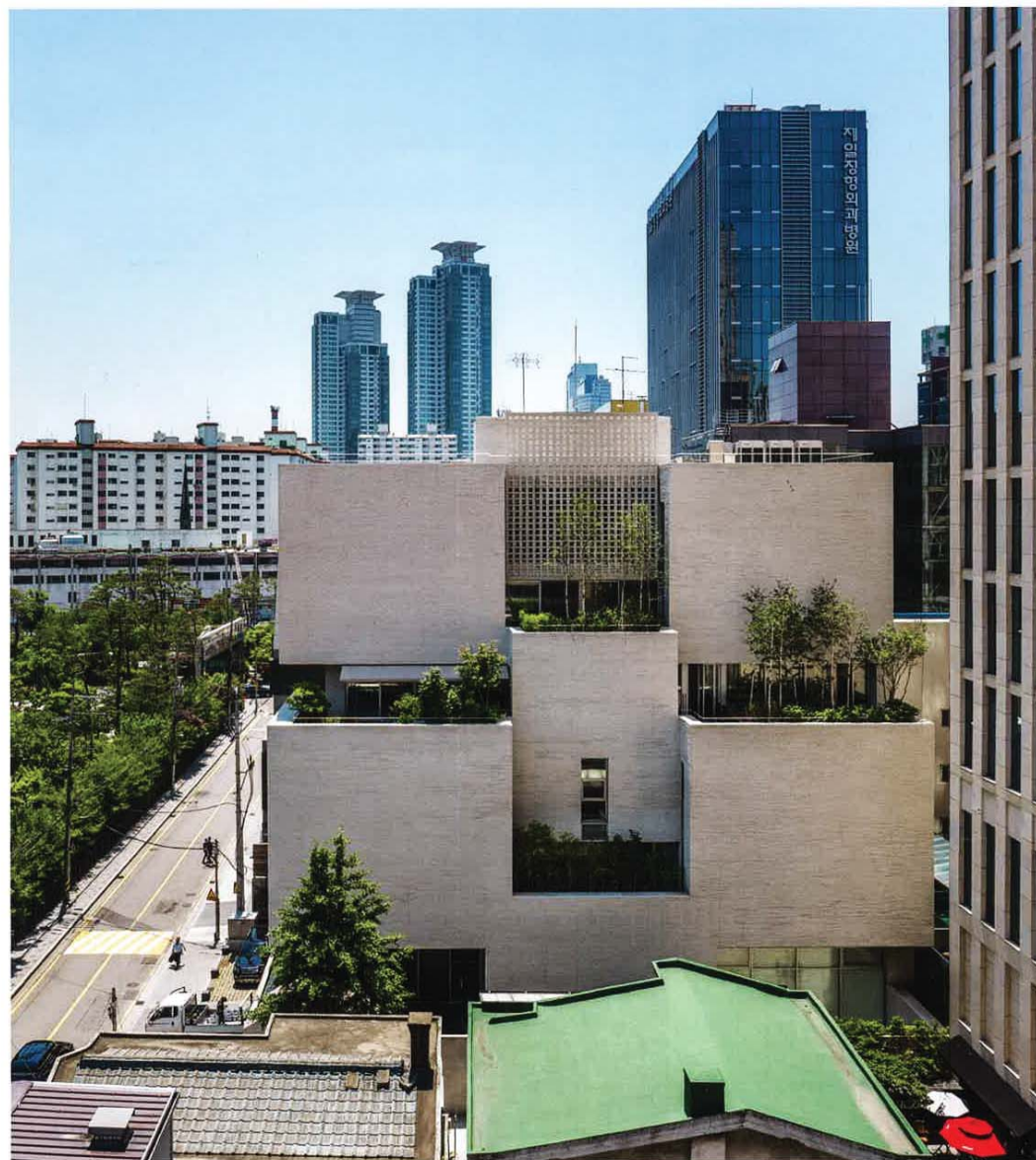
Section



Plan, ground floor



Site plan



The building looks homogeneous from a distance but the individual character of the bricks is apparent up close. Davide Macullo describes the bricks as possessing similar qualities to silk, which has the ability to keep the body warm or cool as needed.

The building includes a magnificent apartment that extends over the five upper floors. The offsetting of the cubes results in spacious terraces.

