

Category of submission: Design

A Place Where Technology and Tradition Meet

This is a project to renovate the main conference room of the National Assembly of South Korea in Seoul. The main concept of this project can be described as “creating a unique space where the new technology and traditional aesthetics meet.”

The request from the Korean Assembly was to make a conference room with up-to-date equipment that would show simultaneously Korea’s advanced information technology and the country’s traditional sense of beauty. Therefore, the most significant issue for the designer was to interpret and express traditional aesthetics harmonized with technology. At the same time, it was also important to symbolize the essential meaning of the Korean Assembly through a physical environment. The design solution was approached to symbolize the space as a venue for making national decisions and to create a form inspired by one of the strongest traditional inventions of their predecessors: the first Korean sundial (Ang-bu-il-gu, 1434, by Young-sil Jang), the first exactly measured Korean map (Dae-dong-yeo-ji-do, 1861, by Jeong-ho Kim), and the first Korean map of the stars (Cheon-sang-yeol-cha-bun-ya-ji-do, 1395, by Kun Kwen). The first Korean sundial was chosen as an inspiration for symbolizing the space.

The first sundial (Ang-bu-il-gu), which informs people of the time and the date, is interpreted as coinciding with the Korean Assembly in terms of showing the direction of its present and its future. Moreover, it also manifests the succeeding spirits of scientific challenge and inventions, from the sundial to Korea’s top information technology industry. The sundial is represented in the ceiling with the decoration of the Korean native characters (Hun-min-jung-em) in frosted glass and light metal.

The traditional atmosphere also is expressed in the use of color and pattern. The traditional five colors are yellow, blue, white, red, and black, and each one has its own meaning: yellow (center of the universe), blue (power of the whole creation), white (truth), red (passion), and black (wisdom). Beyond these meanings, the five colors represent the coexistence of the whole creation in one space as well as express the spirit of harmony of the diversity. The five basic colors were used in the fabric panels of the main walls, which are good for absorbing noise.

Korean paper was designed to be used on the front wall because it is durable and retains warmth; it is still popular for use in modern houses in Korea instead of glass windows. Also, the inlaid wood decoration on the front wall has traditional lattice patterns that function as a cover for speakers and lighting fixtures. Furniture design focused on flexibility for both computer use and diverse discussion, and it was designed to be able to raise and lower the computer monitor on the desk.

Even though all the ideas could not be realized, and due to the duration of the construction period and the budget, only the furniture was built, this project has a valuable meaning that reminds us of the importance of harmonizing the traditional aesthetics of Korea with modern digital technology. If this project is accepted for presentation, the modern interpretation of the unique aesthetics of Korean architecture can be well illustrated and explained.