

Headquarters of the Bank of China

Architect: Pei Partnership Architects, New York
Lighting designer: Kugler Tillotson Associates, New York
Photographer: Kerun Ip, Kiyohiko Higashide
Project location: Beijing

This massive block of the building places a dominant feature of civic architecture on the Chan-An-Avenue in the centre of Beijing. The signature of the architect is unmistakable: the corner tower's rhombus-shaped window, for instance, hints at the form of the skyscraper which I.M. Pei built for the 'Bank of China' in Hong Kong in 1990.

The contrast between the slightly repelling exterior and the friendly atmosphere of the publicly accessible atrium bears reference to Chinese architectural traditions. Circular cut-outs link the inner courtyard with the customers' main hall underneath.

With the Chinese garden in the bank's atrium, the architects have created a place that links the traditional and the modern in a way that is sheer poetry. Rocks from the Chinese province and giant bamboo plants almost 20 metres tall were brought in especially for the garden. The construction not only sets the standard for new buildings in China in terms of design, but also in terms of the quality of execution.

Floor areas are directly illuminated with downlights to mark out the entrances to the hall and act as 'welcome mats'.

The basement level beneath the atrium also includes a large arena. Its foyer is indirectly illuminated with lens wallwashers shining over the stone-clad wall faces.

The auditorium for 2,000 people measures approximately 30 x 20m, its over 6m high ceiling has been executed completely without supports. It is illuminated by downlights with PAR-56 lamps. Additional arches of light in the ceiling panels lend an airy feeling to the room.



