

parallel universe

Work and play, analog and digital, real and illusory—all coexist in a futuristic fantasia of an office by One House Design for Shanghai Transaction Succeed, a financial services company

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Lately, it feels like we cannot escape discussions about the future of work. Where will it take place? Who will do it? And what tools will we use? Many of these conversations position technology at the center, musing over the role of the metaverse and artificial intelligence, so it's no surprise that workplaces are beginning to find design inspiration in this futuristic, digital world. Take the latest such project to come out of One House Design, a Shanghai firm helmed by founder and chief designer Lei Fang.

On the banks of Shanghai's Huangpu River, overlooking the city's Yuejie Expo Park, the new office of financial investment company Shanghai Transaction Succeed combines technological sleekness with artfully abstract interventions, yielding a space that feels plucked from the metaverse, or perhaps *Star Wars*, of which the client is enamored. "Technology, future, and diversity were the key words of our concept," Fang begins. "Our goal was to construct a wonder-filled encounter between people and space, work and life."

One House is well versed in creating marvel-inspiring environments. The multidisciplinary studio's portfolio spans residential, restaurant, and retail projects in addition to offices—in fact, Fang's own won an *Interior Design* Best of Year Award for its obsidian-drenched, gallery-like setting—all rather genre-bending. Here, the third project Fang has completed for this client (he's also designed its office in Lingang, the area known as Shanghai's Silicon Valley, along with the owner's home), he has honed his approach for the brand, expressing the STS ethos and aesthetic through a minimalist color and materials palette and a restrained formal language.

The 21,500 square feet occupy the top floor of a four-story building, enjoying 360-degree views of the Shanghai cityscape and river. Throughout the workspace, which hosts 15 employees and a mix of private meeting rooms and offices alongside open-plan desks and leisure areas, including music and banquet rooms and a fitness area, Fang has zeroed in on the idea of an encounter between worlds. Throughout, a repeated language of curved walls, reflective surfaces, and monochromatic colors makes the office feel like ➤



Previous spread: On the 21,500-square-foot top floor of a four-story building in Yuejie Expo Park, One House Design has created an office for financial investment company Shanghai Transaction Succeed with a futuristic sci-fi feel inspired by the client's affinity for *Star Wars* films.

Opposite left: The entrance sets up the language of curves, reflective surfaces, and a monochromatic palette. **Opposite right, from top:** The curved walls throughout were inspired by the letter D, which is found in the company's logo. In reception, the custom stainless-steel desk contrasts with an accent wall in artificial stone, a material used throughout.

Top: Adjacent to reception is a double-height open space used as a gallery for awards and client products, its columns, also artificial stone, hand-shaped and polished, its ceiling made of mirror-finished stainless. **Bottom:** The music room, a break-out space featuring a Darth Vader motif emerging from behind mirrored glass, is wrapped in LED strip—embedded aluminum panels.



Top: A glass-enclosed gallery volume rotates examples of the core products STS invests in, primarily equipment used in the renewable-energy industry, joined by PET strips in the company's trademark blue, screen-printed with phrases evoking its future-forward ethos. **Bottom, from left:** Lining the walkway off reception, window openings also take the form of an abstracted D. Embossed wallcovering meets wood parquet flooring and custom upholstered seating in an office. **Right:** The leather and stainless chairs by the gallery are also custom.



a futuristic portal—a liminal space between the present and the unknown, between this world and a more streamlined one to come. “The organic forms and undulating silhouettes create a fluidity that mimics a wormhole,” he explains.

Upon entering, the reception area immediately transports visitors and staff to a gleaming, high-tech environment. A high-shine, stainless-steel desk emerges from a concave, dark-gray curved accent wall, with window openings set off by built-in interior walls that establish a visual divider between the office and the world beyond. “We wanted to break the form of the conventional workplace,” Fang notes.

While the floor plate is rectangular, and enclosed spaces retain their traditional rectilinear plans, at the heart is an exhibition showcase that indeed breaks the mold. Enclosed in two stacked, open-square frames within an oversize glass cylinder, the gallerylike volume houses rotating examples

of the core products the company invests in, mostly raw materials for the renewable energy industry. “The idea was to present a realm within a realm,” Fang says.

The aesthetic qualities within this artful box spill out to inform the rest of the project. The curvature of the glass partitions is mimicked in the curving walls and dividers populating the office, and the blue of the screen-printed phrases wrapping the installation is repeated in select furnishings and statement walls throughout, the color extracted from the company logo.

The inspiration for the curves also came from the company’s branding, as the logo incorporates the shape of the letter D. Fang used variations of the letter to inform the partitions, window openings, and furniture selections. “D is also in line with Dao, which is consistent with STS’s brand values,” Fang says, referencing the East Asian philosophical ➤



Left: Curved walls complemented by flat surfaces of stainless and mirrored glass evoke the feeling of moving through a high-tech portal. **Right, from top:** The mirrored ceilingscape extends to the office's banquet room with teppanyaki bar. The conference room is accessed by a small set of stairs, encircled by an outdoor terrace.

Opposite: Translucent film covers a 15-foot-diameter light box, while flooring is artificial stone.



tradition emphasizing that the natural order of the universe must be lived and experienced, rather than intellectualized.

Here, we uncover the core tension that distinguishes this workplace design: the collision between existing in a physical versus a digital, intellectually manufactured world. While the concept may conjure the look and feel of the metaverse, where shapes are abstracted and details blur, this seamlessness was created through a close attention to craft.

For example, take the primary material used to form the curvilinear aspects. Fang sourced a resin-based artificial stone that, when heated, can be curved and shaped, then polished to create a seamless connection between floor, wall, and ceiling. "It allowed us to achieve a 'one-piece' effect," Fang explains—a sense of fluidity that could only be found through careful, handcrafted artistry.

Additionally, while much of the work of STS takes place digitally, the workplace dedicates ample space for activities focused on personal interaction, like the music room and the lounge area adjacent to the gallery. Taken together, the office reminds us that although our lives increasingly play out in a digital landscape, the pleasures of a well-crafted physical space are best enjoyed in person. 🍷

PROJECT TEAM

LI HUANG; WANG JIARUI; ZHAO BINJIE; WENDY LI; PASS PAN; CHEN YING: ONE HOUSE DESIGN. SHANGHAI KAIBO DECORATION ENGINEERING CO.: STAINLESS-STEEL WORK. YICHENG GLASS: GLASSWORK.

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