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MahaNakhon – Bangkok's new icon

Parking garage cladding made of metal mesh as a discreet companion

Temples and dream beaches with turquoise-blue water make Thailand a sought-after destination for tourists from all over the world. The capital Bangkok, with a population of some nine million, is a city of contrasts with irresistible magic. In contrast to many other Asian megacities, however, the city has few contemporary architectural highlights. The German architect Ole Scheeren created Bangkok's new landmark in the form of the 314-meter high MahaNakhon. A gently spiraling, perforated belt of glass balconies and terraces forming a staggered arrangement gives the reflective louvered façade its unmistakable, pixelated face. The MahaNakhon is complemented by the seven-story shopping temple *Cube* and a fully automated parking garage. For the cladding of the parking garage, the architect chose PC-Sambesi metal mesh from GKD – Gebr. Kufferath AG. Alongside the extraordinary aesthetics, its proven low-maintenance solar protection and reliable fall guard protection properties were crucial factors behind this decision.

In Bangkok, facets of village and megacity, Buddhism and business are thrown together in a seemingly random way to form a fascinating mix of cosmopolitan flair and centuries-old traditions. The formerly quiet residence city was transformed into a pulsating metropolis that is home to millions of people in just six centuries. Since the 1980s, fully air-conditioned office towers, malls and apartment blocks have been shooting up like mushrooms. Today, the hectic Asian way of life dominates Buddhist tranquility. This contrasting nature is reflected everywhere in the face of the city. Alongside the *Grand Palace*, more than 400 temples bear witness to the rich culture of



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the capital, which stand side-by-side with Chinese pagodas, colonial-style buildings, dreary tin huts and gigantic glass malls. Scattered prestige buildings such as the 20-story *Robot Building*, the *Nation Tower*, the colors and form of which recall cubism, or the naive-looking *Elephant Building* complete the city's chaotic skyline.

Tower of superlatives

When commissioning the MahaNakhon, the building owner, PACE Development Corporation Ltd., desired a building that sets an outstanding architectural highlight while also being integrated in the city as a public place and a worthy addition to Bangkok's contradictory mix of tradition and modernity. Ole Scheeren took up the exuberant dynamics of the metropolis in his design and created a new urban center across an area of 135,000 square meters. This is also reflected by its name MahaNakhon, which means *Big City*. The three-part complex consisting of the tower itself, the *Cube* and a parking tower graces the city's financial district. Across 77 floors, the tower offers space for 209 luxury apartments with between 125 and 830 square meters, 155 hotel rooms and numerous shops and restaurants. A particular highlight is the 3,500 square meter Skybar, which grants previously unknown views of Bangkok from a height of 300 meters. However, the MahaNakhon's character as a new icon of the city is due to the staggered glass balconies and terraces, which give the giant the feel of an incomplete building with a vertical twist. From a distance, the fragmented pixel belt resembles a helix – an association that was consciously chosen by the architect as a synonym for genesis and development. At the same time he uses the image of the seemingly randomly arranged pixels to visualize the intricacy and chaotic dynamics of the urban structure. The apparently missing pixels also give the viewer the feeling that they are peering into the interior of the building.



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The future of parking

The winding pixelated belt of the tower, which starts at the peak of the tower, ends at the spacious indoor and outdoor terraces in the sales and gastronomic area on the lowest seven floors of the MahaNakhon. Together with the exterior of the neighboring *Cube* mall, they form an outdoor atrium as a public event location. A parking tower rises behind the *Cube*, offering space for almost 900 cars over 10,400 square meters with an automated parking and retrieval system. In order to adapt the appearance of this structure to the luxurious overall ambience, the architect chose shimmering PC-Sambesi stainless steel mesh from GKD – Gebr. Kufferath AG for the cladding. A total of 464 framed mesh panels, each 2.9 meters high and up to 1.8 meters wide, subtly take up the visual appearance of the louvered façade of the MahaNakhon. As a discreet companion to the reflective surface of the tower, they also reflect the surroundings and the frequently changing sky that is a feature of the country. Some 2,100 square meters of rigid mesh lend the parking garage an elegant look. In addition to the high-quality appearance of the metallic skin, the architect was also convinced by the ease with which the cladding can be maintained. The attractive shell fulfills two functional roles: it serves as reliable fall guard protection on all floors, while also playing a key role in supporting the environmentally friendly overall concept of the MahaNakhon complex. In the tropical climate of Bangkok, the light- and air-permeable membrane proves its worth as an effective solar protection solution, which also enables natural climate control of the parking tower. Because daylight can enter the building freely, less electric lighting is required. In monsoon seasons the mesh also protects the parked vehicles from driving rain. The stainless steel, which is almost 100 percent recyclable at the end of its service life, also improves the ecological footprint of the building complex. The MahaNakhon was opened in August 2016 in the heart of Bangkok following an eight-year planning and construction phase. Today,



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the country's tallest building is constantly in dialog with the city and its people. As such, Bangkok's new landmark links opportunities for identification and participation with the role of an ambassador for a city on the rise.

6.052 characters incl. spaces

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