



· Hanging in the Opus 'tree house'

Opus House, Christchurch



Client: Amherst Properties Ltd

Location: Christchurch

Completion Date: December 2015

With the chance to design our own offices in Christchurch we looked to the surrounding environment and brought a dream to life by creating an urban 'tree house'.

The location of the building on a busy avenue opposite the sprawling Hagley park was a key design influence. The narrative was to create a sophisticated 'tree house' inspired design that incorporates the tranquillity of nature and innovative technologies.

The Opus team designed the form of the building as two floating boxes suspended above the ground with fully glazed 'open ends' providing stunning views of Hagley Park and the Port Hills. A lattice design creating a dappled affect has been created by alternating solid walls and glazed elements. A feature spine wall defines the main entrance and north stairway and, as a trunk, it extends vertically through the building both externally and internally. Folding at roof level the trunk forms a clasp over the west block and extends over an impressive deck. This deliberate approach links the interior and exterior spaces and anchors the building in its urban context. Dark coloured materials on the exterior reflect the moody vibe of the avenue while providing a contrast to the organic forms and colours from the park opposite.

Harnessing the robust power of a viscous damper structure not only improves the earthquake resilience of the building but also articulates the tree house design further. Each damper appears as a limb of the building imitating the branches of a tree. The lightweight structural steel frame and viscous

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damper design enables the building to move freely in seismic events and return to its original position, like a tree moving in the wind, with minimal damage to the building or disruption to the activities within. Instrumentation fixed to the building measures and monitors how much movement the building undergoes in a seismic event, providing valuable research data.

The health and well-being of the building occupants was a key design consideration with all workstations and hallways having access to natural lighting and views. The main stairway offers an outlook over the park, an expansive landing area where people can stop and chat, and is designed to encourage staff to use it as the main means of moving between levels. Staff areas on the ground floor include locker rooms and showers for those who choose to run, walk or cycle to or from work and for those who use the park for lunchtime exercise. The open area balcony on the top floor also provides an opportunity for fresh air and stunning views across the city.

opus.co.nz/projects/Opus-House