

The new Makati high-rise that's making heads turn

By Alex Y. Vergara

THE 33-STORY ZUELLIG Building, the first high-rise office building to rise in Makati's Central Business District in 10 years, is almost finished, and it has been making heads turn.

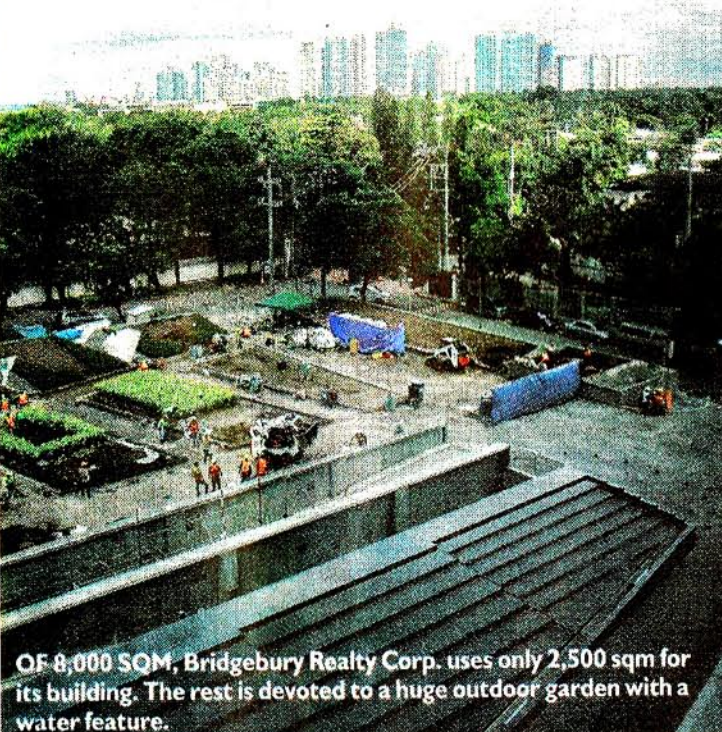
It's a stark beauty at the corner of Paseo de Roxas and Makati Avenue—a near-transparent glass monolith, the lin-

ear patterns on its façade subtly visible day or night.

Its design has been drawing the curiosity and interest not only of passers-by and commuters but also of architects and designers. It looks distinct from the current and past generations of high-rises.

Built at a cost of P7 billion, the glass tower is also the first structure of its kind in the country to

THE NEW/ C2



OF 8,000 SQM, Bridgebury Realty Corp. uses only 2,500 sqm for its building. The rest is devoted to a huge outdoor garden with a water feature.



BRIDGEBURY Realty Corp. director Daniel Zuellig (third from left) with landscape architect Efrén Aurelio, Bridgebury Realty Corp. marketing director Chickie Locsin and architect William Coscolluela at Zuellig Building's Sky Garden



DANIEL Zuellig: "We want something that complies with the expectations of the 21st century, where sustainability is a big factor."



THE ZUELLIG Building's Sky Garden, at the 32nd level, has indigenous plants, local bamboo and an incredible view of the skyline.

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be precertified gold by the US Green Building Council for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED).

There have been other gold-certified LEED buildings in Metro Manila, but none of them are high-rises. Foremost examples are the British Embassy and Sun Life of Canada buildings at Bonifacio Global City in Taguig.

Zuellig Building's developers, Bridgebury Realty Corp., led by director Daniel Zuellig, chose to conform with the stringent standards imposed by LEED in the real estate company's bid to create not only a premium-grade office tower, but also a green, sustainable building designed for the future.

"The requirements are pretty straightforward," said Zuellig. "The challenge really is to do it right."

Efficient building

Bridgebury tapped seasoned architect William Coscolluela, with New York-based Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) as design consultant. Leighton Asia Ltd., an Australian firm, and Manila-based EA Aurelio Landscape Architects were contractor and landscape developer, respectively.

"Our design brief is quite simple," said Zuellig. "We just want a very efficient office building. Apart from space efficiency, we want something that complies with the expectations of the 21st century, where sustainability is a big factor."

In this regard, Coscolluela has been Bridgebury's ultimate guide, "leading the way, giving us all the directions to get to where we are now," Zuellig added.

Since the project's groundbreaking in 2009, LEED auditors and consultants have been monitoring the building's progress by using an exacting point system that includes the use of durable and sustainable materials, proper disposal of waste, and adherence to world-class safety standards, among other measures.

"It's a costlier and slower process," said Zuellig, whose Swiss grandfather migrated to the Philippines as a teenager and settled here for good a little over a century ago. "But it's been worth it."

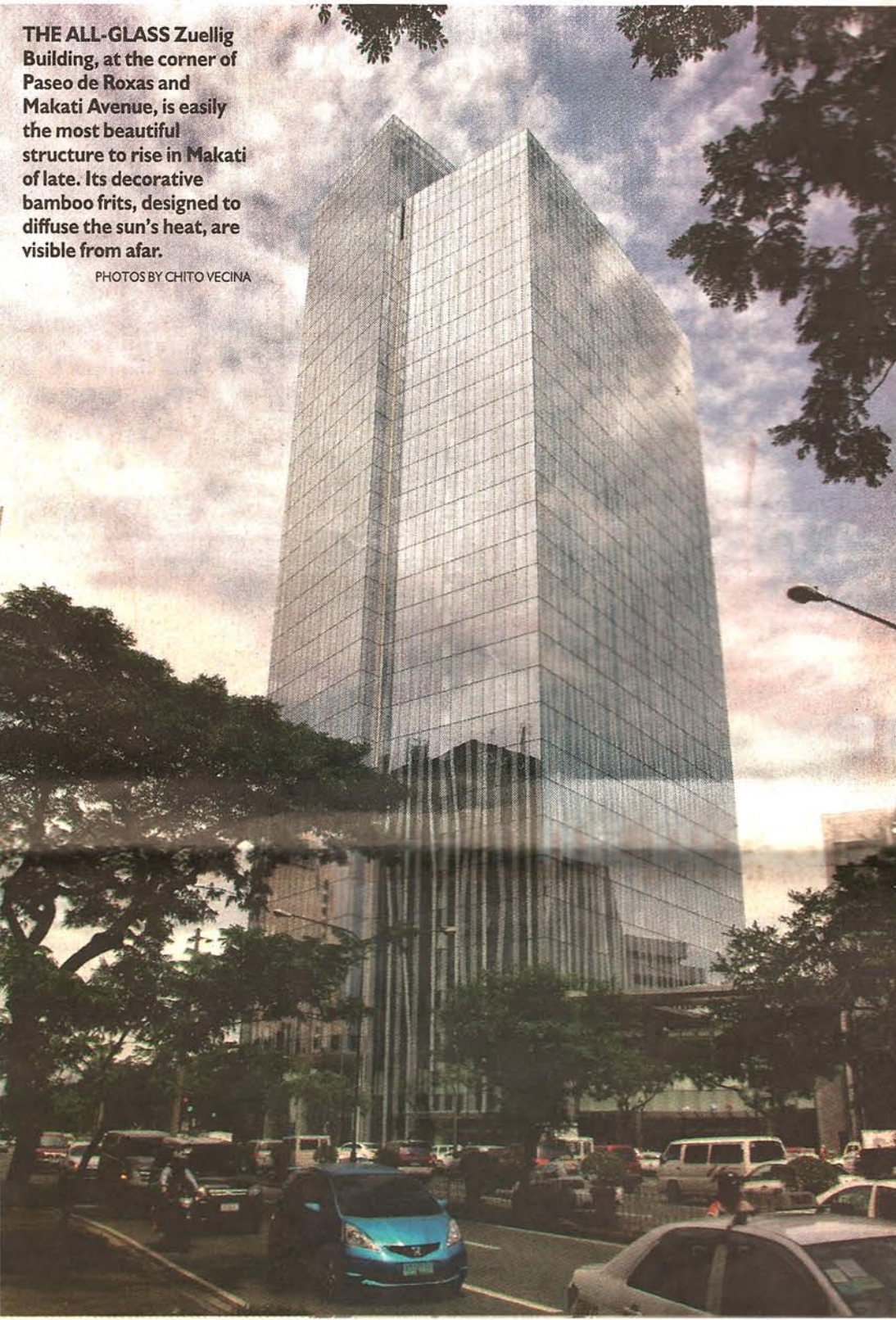
Bridgebury could have done away with LEED's exacting requirements, and simply build a sturdy, imposing and modern-looking building without an environmental body breathing down its neck.

Right way

Instead, it chose to do it the right way by installing, among other features, a network of underground sprinkler systems that uses gray- or rainwater for watering plants and flushing toilets.

"Watering from above using an old-fashioned sprinkler system wastes a lot of water," said landscape architect Efrén Aurelio, president of EA Aurelio. "The water only tends to evaporate. And instead of allowing the water to simply seep through in different directions, we installed plastic receptacles underneath the soil to store some water. The plants' roots have a way of absorbing them."

Rather than make do with a cheaper variety of glass from China, Bridgebury, based on SOM's recommendations, went for US-based Viracón's more ex-



THE ALL-GLASS Zuellig Building, at the corner of Paseo de Roxas and Makati Avenue, is easily the most beautiful structure to rise in Makati of late. Its decorative bamboo frits, designed to diffuse the sun's heat, are visible from afar.

PHOTOS BY CHITO VECINA

Why this first tower to rise in the business district in 10 years isn't only a design marvel, but is also a 21st-century building

pensive sheets of double-glazed glass or curtain wall with a series of trademark ceramic-baked bamboo frits that run parallel from the building's lower level up to its 33rd level.

These frits aren't superfluous or decorative stickers. They're baked during production and, thus, are integral to one of the double-glazed glass panels. But as Zuellig loved to point out, "they're sophisticated stickers."

"If you look at some of the glass made in China and Japan, they're also good," said the veteran Coscolluela, whose more recent high-rise projects include the RBC Plaza and Philamlife Tower, both in Makati. "But since this building is the first glass tower of its kind in the country, the owners wanted to do it right."

Apart from being functional, the frits gave the building an organic aesthetic, which is quite apt for a vibrant Asian country



IN KEEPING with Zuellig Building's modern and minimalist lines, Bridgebury Realty opts for modern and streamlined interiors.



PLANTS are watered by an underground sprinkler system using gray water.

like the Philippines.

In the top three

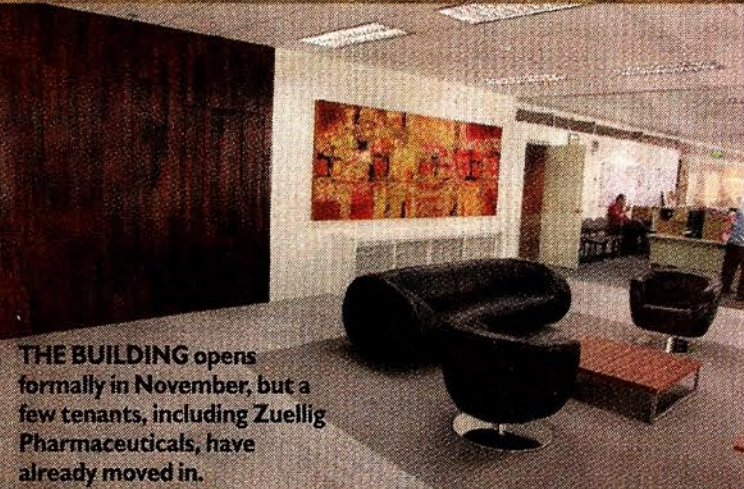
"Aside from getting gold precertification from LEED, we were also able to get the project recognized by Mipim in the office building category," said Zuellig.

Mipim, a French-based body, is equivalent to the Oscars of the property development industry. With this development, the Zuellig Building is already assured of a place in one of Mip-

im's categories: Best Office and Business Development.

"We're in the top three, with an entry each from Hong Kong and mainland China," said Zuellig. "It was tough because China alone fielded 55 entries in various categories."

In November, Mipim will choose which of the three buildings in the said category gets gold, silver and bronze. Zuellig and his team are keeping their fingers crossed.



THE BUILDING opens formally in November, but a few tenants, including Zuellig Pharmaceuticals, have already moved in.

"If Mr. (Brillante) Mendoza could get awards in Cannes for his films, it would also be good for the country if a building in the Philippines is recognized internationally," he said.

But before committing himself to the look, Zuellig and his Filipino consultants, including Coscolluela, traveled to the US, where the use of frits on glass buildings is quite common, to see for themselves how effective they are.

Several airports and the Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York use frits in the form of either lines or polka dots.

"For me, it was a courageous move because it has never been applied here in the Philippines," said Zuellig. "My main concern was it might look messy from the outside, or it might distract those working inside the building."

Functional purpose

Based on SOM's research, Zuellig's fears were unfounded. Occupants of glass buildings with frits welcome them, as the feature allows them to see the world outside and still be insulated from the environment's harmful effects. It's certainly better than working in a box with a handful of windows, respondents said.

"The tinted, double-glazed glass with frits beneath them both have a decorative and functional purpose," said Zuellig. "They deflect the glare and insulate the building from the afternoon heat, resulting in more natural light and lower use of air-conditioning, especially during daytime."

"It's a misconception that glass buildings, because they're transparent, trap heat," Coscolluela added. "If you use the right kind of glass, your building will, in fact, be cooler."

LEED puts emphasis on lower energy consumption in its point system. At the same time, it has limited Zuellig Building's underground parking to 660 slots. There's adequate space for several bicycle stands and shower areas to encourage office workers to take their bikes to work.

Zuellig sees this project both as a statement and an investment in the future for his company as well as for the fragile environment.

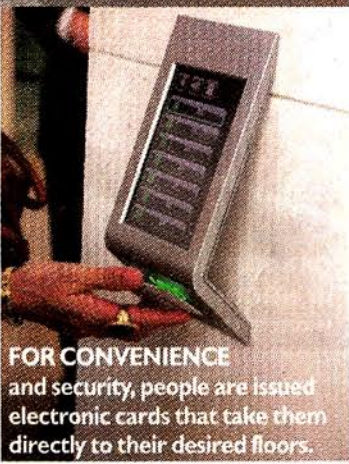
"Nowadays, we should all be aware of sustainability issues and the need to reduce our carbon footprint," he said. "Modern technology should be used for better energy efficiency to lessen the impact of our presence on the planet."

At the same time, by adopting the LEED system, Bridgebury hopes to target office tenants willing to pay premium rental rates.

"These are all companies who also subscribe to sustainability," said Zuellig. "They share our vision."

Outdoor garden

When LEED came onboard, Bridgebury was also required to devote 2,500 sq m of its 8,000-sq-m lot to an outdoor garden and water feature on the



FOR CONVENIENCE and security, people are issued electronic cards that take them directly to their desired floors.

ground level. Since space is premium in Makati's CBD, the decision in itself already entailed a great deal of expense.

A series of gardens using indigenous foliage such as eugenia, pandakaki, white champaca, filicium, podocarpus and local bamboo varieties was replicated on the second and third levels, where the future food court and retail areas will be, and on the 32nd level, an ideal semi-outdoor venue for parties dubbed as Sky Garden.

"One of LEED's requirements is to prioritize the use of indigenous plants," said Aurelio. "We chose a number of shrubs with lush leaves that cover the soil, thus, preventing water from evaporating quickly. And in keeping with the building's signature bamboo frits, we also planted pole bamboos on the second and third levels as well as the Sky Garden."

Enough points

Since Zuellig's latest baby has accumulated enough points to exceed gold, he hopes to eventually get a platinum certification from LEED once the building goes through another round of auditing when it formally opens in November. Tenants, including Zuellig's pharmaceutical company, have started moving in.

Zuellig Building can lease out a total 56,000 sq m. The terms could range from as big as 1,800 sq m to as small as 188 sq m. Take-da, a pharmaceutical company, Misys and Agoda, a travel agency, have already made the big move.

"I also have to give credit to the multinational team of architects, engineers, landscape artists and consultants responsible for making this project a reality," said Coscolluela. "The contractor may be an Australian firm, but the people who work in the building's construction are all Filipinos."

In all the years he's been designing buildings, this is the first time Coscolluela has worked on a project following LEED's standards. The requirements may be stringent, he said, but they're doable and, in the long run, quite practical and make a lot of sense.

"I won't have second thoughts recommending it to colleagues and future clients," he said. "The success of a project of this scale really depends on the client. Despite the added expense and time to do it, the client really has to be totally into it."

Visit the author's blog at alexyvergara.wordpress.com