

# Let There Be Light

Viettel Offsite Studio in Hanoi was strategically designed to let in light and nature

by Deborah R. Huso

**F**ew materials demonstrate how simple design and construction can create startlingly beautiful places as well as concrete. This is especially true for the newly completed office space and pavilions for the Vietnamese telecommunications group Viettel on the outskirts of Hanoi, Vietnam.

Through a striking use of concrete walls placed to create a series of V-shaped rooms facing walls of glazing, the structure—known as the Viettel Offsite Studio—establishes a refuge from the city and guides the eye toward green space (Fig. 1).

## Amplifying Nature

Designed by Vo Trong Nghia Architects (VTN Architects), which has offices in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, the 1427 m<sup>2</sup> (15,360 ft<sup>2</sup>) Viettel Offsite Studio uses

geometry to amplify visitors' experience of the building's natural surroundings. Situated on the Viettel Academy campus in Hanoi's Thạch Thất district about 30 km (18.6 miles) from the city center, the building is mainly a meeting space and retreat for the company's executives. The building's structure and façade are concrete and glass (Fig. 2), while the interior showcases tall walls of glazing and spaces designed with metal and wood (Fig. 3).

Defined by six V-shaped structures that open like books to a lake and garden view (Fig. 4), the facility contains four indoor studios, a reception space (Fig. 5), and a dining hall. Opening to the north, the interconnected rooms take advantage of soft daylighting. The terraced roof gardens serve as outdoor studio spaces. While the tall concrete walls shield the courtyards and roof gardens from the harsher sunlight of morning and afternoon, small openings in the walls provide



Fig. 1: The Viettel Offsite Studio on the Viettel Academy campus in Thạch Thất district, Hanoi, Vietnam

gentle lighting and breezes for the occupants (Fig. 6 and 7).

Vo Trong Nghia, Principal at VTN Architects, says his firm's first purpose was "to design a building with open spaces to take advantage of the site's surrounding landscape, such as hills, trees, and a big lake."



**Fig. 2: Concrete and glass are the main components of the building's structure and façade**



**Fig. 3: One of the meeting spaces at the Viettel Offsite Studio**



**Fig. 4: V-shaped concrete structures open like books to a lake and garden view**



**Fig. 5: A reception area at the Viettel Offsite Studio**



**Fig. 6: One of the terraced rooftop gardens at the Viettel Offsite Studio**



**Fig. 7: Stepped square cutouts in the slabs allow some direct sunlight to pass onto the courtyards created by the V-shaped units**

## Segmenting Space

The V-shaped concrete façades pitch into one another at slight angles to create a triangular apex at the top of the connecting walls. Each apex shields the entrance to the enclosed space to the north. The overall effect is an architecture resembling the brutalist style of the mid-twentieth century.

Each set of bookended walls exhibits differing heights to create what Nghia calls “a rhythm that blends into the beautiful landscape of the faraway hills and mountains.” This “open-book” design compels the structure’s occupants to focus their attention on the outdoors. The V-shaped blocks follow the lay of the land and are all connected by a single-story open corridor (Fig. 8).

Made of cast-in-place concrete, each wall is 450 mm (18 in.) thick. The maximum wall height is 30 m (98 ft). Nghia indicates the design team employed cast-in-place concrete

intentionally from the start. “Precast concrete would have provided a better quality of concrete,” he adds, “but it cannot provide high units.” Cast-in-place concrete also allowed for rigid connections between placements.

Nghia also points to the uniqueness of the concrete itself: “We used raw concrete with unfinished layers,” he explains. While such finish is very popular in developed countries like Japan, Korea, and the United States, it is quite rare in Vietnam. The design team’s goal was to use raw concrete to emulate the rustic, natural experience of the building while also reducing long-term maintenance needs.

While the total project construction time took about a year and a half, erection of the exterior structure took only about 10 months, according to VTN Architects. The building was opened for business in July 2019.

## Acknowledgment

All photos courtesy of Vo Trong Nghia Architects.

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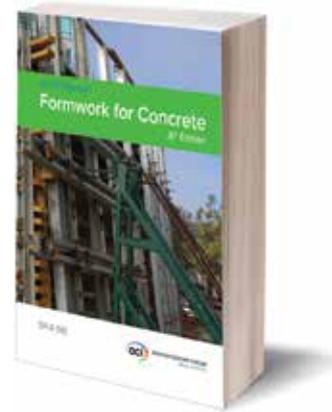
**Fig. 8:** A single-story open corridor connecting V-shaped buildings at the Viettel Offsite Studio



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