

**Ar. Stephen
Roberts**
Chairman,
Bentel Associates

Like most children, Stephen never gave a lot of thought to a “real” career, beyond being famous as either a film or sports star. However, during high school, he got interested in art and technical drawing, and it was this combination that made him choose architecture as a career path.

On leaving high school in 1967, he enrolled in a School of Architecture as a part time student and at the same time began working with a large firm of architects, so his studies went hand-in-hand with practical experience. During studies, he was able to gain much experience on the drawing board, working as a junior team member on a variety of projects between 1967 and 1970, including a new wing for the Imperial College of Science and Technology, and a Naval Base.

He studied architecture at an established facility called the Brixton School of Architecture, which has since then been joined to the South East London Polytechnic. He graduated with a Higher National Certificate in Building, with an Architectural bias. Though he could have pursued full degree, however, another offer that he could not refuse, changed the whole course of his career.

After college, he continued his employment, where he received a request to join the branch office in Botswana, Africa on a two year contract. He saw this as a great opportunity not only to expand his skill set, but also to visit a part of the world that he would have ideally never ventured in to otherwise.

He arrived in Gaborone in September of 1970, where he became only the second staff member of a full complement of two. Being part of such a small team enabled him to jump in the deep end and become responsible not only for design and documentation, but job supervision and administration.

The experience proved to be better than a five year degree course, and he was able to see through the completion of a number of different buildings, including offices, medical suites, university buildings and residential schemes. It was also during this time in Botswana that he met and married his life partner. At the end of the contract he returned to the UK, and was again offered another two year contract overseas, this time in Tanzania.

The office in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) was far more established than that in Gaborone, with a staff complement of more than twenty, including other disciplines, such as structural and MEP engineers. He was placed in a leadership role to take over a number of projects, which were mostly Government funded, and included schools and colleges of education. After Dar es Salaam, his intention was to return to the UK to complete his degree, but again a further opportunity saw him take up residence in Johannesburg, South Africa, where his journey with Bentel Associates began in 1976.

Joining Bentel was also the beginning of his relationship with retail architecture. Bentel was already well established as specialists in this asset class, and he was immediately put in a team working on one of five new hypermarkets throughout the country. These were the first hypermarkets to be established in South Africa, and were developed for a

new Retailer, who quickly became one of South Africa's premier retail chains, and it is a relationship with Bentel that still exists, even after forty years. In 1978, he was appointed to lead the Store Planning team, and for the next 28 years the design and development of supermarkets and hypermarkets became his primary focus, along with specialist knowledge of retail architecture in general. During those years Bentel pioneered the design of retail centres in South Africa, including the first enclosed mall, the first regional centre and the first themed centre. His appointment to the board came in 1988, and subsequently he became the Chairman in 2003.

Stephen opines that architecture is beyond science. An Architect needs to think beyond buildings. His/her vision needs to be not only wider and global but also needs to touch human emotions. ‘Architecture is the one fine thread that interlinks society, environment and economy thus affecting lives of people across social strata.’

His Journey in India...

Bentel's relationship with India began in 2003/4, when

they were recommended as retail specialists to ICS Group, who were looking to add to their portfolio the design and development of shopping centres. Thus the Joint Venture was established, and the past ten years has seen Bentel become a preferred brand with a number of the top developers in India. Their portfolio has also expanded, both in South Africa and India, to include other asset classes, such as commercial, residential and hospitality projects. He has had the privilege of spending a lot of time in India, visiting all of the major cities, and he admits that a love affair now exists between India and him. India has become like a second home, and he is a great ambassador for the country.

Bentel's reputation in India grew quickly after the completion of its first full scheme, the Oberoi Mall in Mumbai. Following on that success, the architecture firm became involved in large centres in Bangalore, Kolkata, Bhopal and Hyderabad. The portfolio has now grown to include award-winning projects for offices and mixed-use developments. There has also been an expansion into the residential market. The ties between Bentel's office in

India and South Africa have grown ever stronger over the years, to the extent that they are now working as one office, complementing the skills of both to create an efficient and experienced team that can offer the client a great value.

Stephen believes that India stands on the threshold of a vast opportunity in the property development market. Whilst the retail sector may currently have slowed down, it is only a matter of time before the boom will happen. In all other sectors, India is in need of more residential, commercial, and hospitality projects, not to mention infrastructure, which has already begun with new airports, roads and inner city metros. He has no doubt that Bentel's prospects in India are huge and hence they intend to use India as a base for further expansion globally. Since their first arrival in India, he has witnessed the property development industry become more discerning and more knowledgeable and more sophisticated with each year that passes, which only bodes well for the future.

The Work culture, people, ethics, and plans are few impressive qualities he found in India. People are not just skilled, but diligent and hardworking, and display a respect for each other that is not seen anywhere else he has travelled. The diversity of cultures across India makes traveling an exciting and pleasing experience that together make India truly incredible for Stephen.

“Architecture is the one fine thread that interlinks society, environment and economy thus affecting lives of people across social strata.”

Architects



Pacific Mall, Dehradun

Architects

The rise of the contours on the western side of the plot allowed the design firm 'Bentel Associates' to create a mall entry at the first level of the centre in addition to the southern corner entrance on grade, offering a balanced distribution of the footfalls entering the mall. The retail needed to rise up to the second floor in order to achieve the bulk required by the product mix.

The emphasis was to create multiple gathering spaces in the centre. 10,000 sq.ft. rectangular atrium space is planned at the centre of the mall footprint which easily connects shops at each level and also acts as a large indoor promotional space. The rectangular piazza space is tilted not only to create dynamism but also to achieve variation in shop sizes required for good tenant mix. This enclosed plaza is well connected to the street at ground and first floor by long stepped outdoor piazza and is easily accessible to shoppers.

Indoor plaza space with fashion anchors and vanilla shops is more trade focused which leisure, relaxed and reposing ambience of outdoor piazza with restaurants, café makes a perfect offering.

Project at a Glance:

Project Name: Pacific Mall

Location: Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India

Client: Pacific Development Corporation Ltd.

Architect & Interior Designer: Bentel Associates

Other Consultants:

- Graphic Designer- Satyam Enterprises
- Lighting Designer- In-house
- Landscape Architect-Dilkhush Rose Farm

Area: 230,410 sq.ft.

Cost: Approximate 75 crores

Third floor triple volume space food court overlooking the main atrium volume is long linear street and has a view over MasuriHills on North-West side. With large volume space, diffused natural light, and International food brands the food court is already a popular destination.

Interior Design....

Objective was to enhance concept of Large Piazza and create neutral backdrop for shopfronts. Warm colour pallet with shades of Badge, Grey and Timber is used throughout the mall.

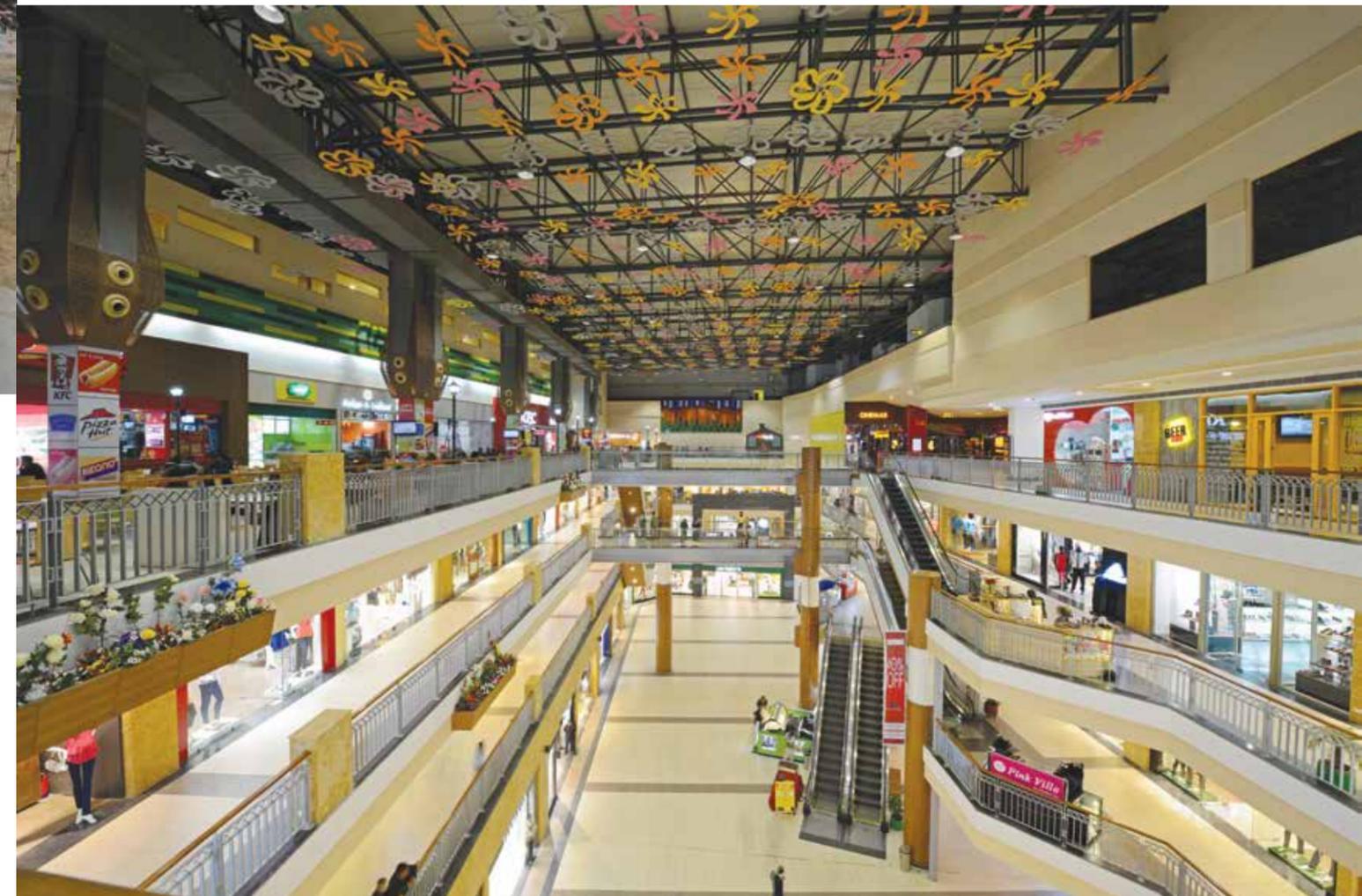
The site....

Dehradun is called a beautiful town that is located in the Doon Valley surrounded by the Shivalik Hills, a mountain range of the outer Himalayas. The Doon city is famous for its natural scenic beauty, which includes some visually attractive landscapes and enjoyable climate.

The three acre site on Dun - Mussourie road having an 85 m frontage with a picturesque backdrop of Mussourie hills posed quite a challenge from its topography; a 17m drop in North West side of the site.

The built mass....

The solution was to exploit the natural contours of the land parcel to be used in the development scheme. The 17 m steep drop was best utilised by providing two sub structure parking levels, thus minimising the excavation required and optimising cost compared to a conventional basement. Basement Area being planned along the contour is naturally lit & ventilated. A precise and efficient parking design allowed for a hassle free parking experience to the customer with a direct connectivity to and from the mall into the parking levels.



Architects

Shopfront demising columns are expressed with natural sand stone clad. Badge matt tiles with dark granite border at shops for mall flooring, Natural sandstone for demising wall and badge and white ceiling create warm feel. This is further enhanced by Hardwood Hand Rail and Timber cladding for columns and escalators.

Sandstone portal at ground level at the atrium edge and double height grey granite portal connecting two levels are few elements introduced to break monotony of atrium Bulkhead. Coloured murals, linear colour bands above food court, flowerbeds and flagpoles add vibrancy in the overall interior spaces.

With restrictions on floor heights all services are routed within the shops to achieve maximum possible height in the mall corridors.

Triple volume space of the food court being long and narrow is conceptualised as a High street with alfresco seating. Steel columns within food court are treated as back lit timber lanterns. These lantern features along with street lights, benches, Bollards and colourful flower cut-outs suspended from ceiling and hotel corridor windows at floor above gives typical street piazza look to the food court. Large volume space, diffused natural light, colour

full back drop of murals and suspended feature, valley view are few unique futures of this space.

The lighting, indoor air quality and public health....

Built to maximize the utilization of natural light, the building uses a minimum of interior columns with a diagonally tilted central atrium sporting a clear storey soft roof, shading the building from direct solar radiation. At the same time, good lighting design is spread beyond the realm of visual appeal to lower the energy costs and heat gain.

The HVAC system is designed in such a manner that the outside enthalpy conditions of the city shall be used to keep the centre conditioned for half the operational time with use of minimal energy.

A sewage treatment plant to generate recycled water and its reuse in gardening and air conditioning make up are adopted in the building to conserve natural water resource and reduce refuse disposal.

The fabric canopy and signage band cut the vision angle and helps in reducing the built form scale. The upper building mass is treated in horizontal plaster bands finished in alternate shades of grey.

