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How M Moser Associates became the industry 'go to'

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Talking VR & O2O with the Co-Founder & Chief Creative Officer of Zanadu, Dirk Eschenbacher

All Together Now

How a collaborative, integrated approach mixes
with passion at the world's leading
workspace creator

By Nick Withycombe

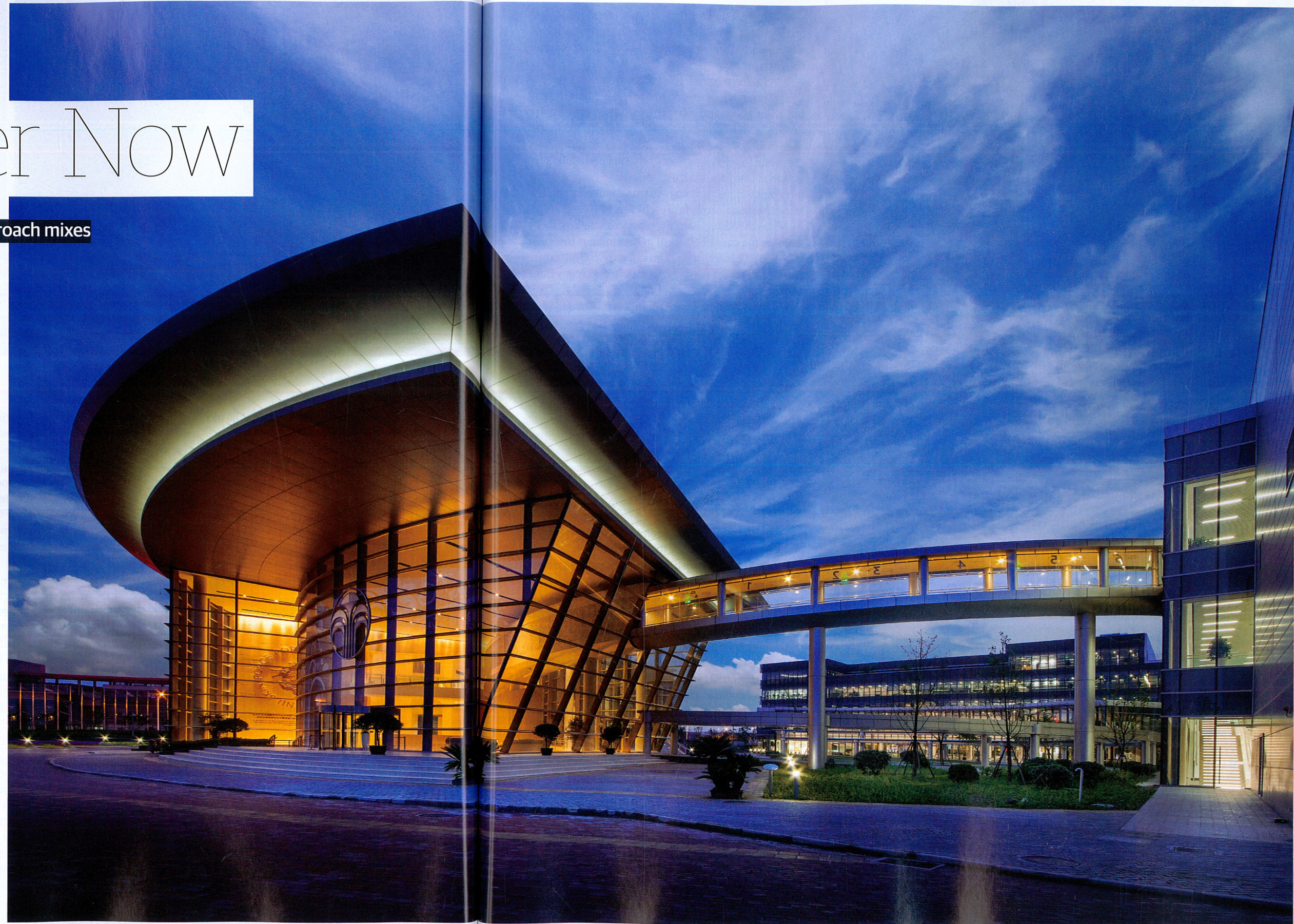
When introducing M Moser Associates, it is more efficient to simply say that from their 15 global locations, they have constructed, designed and engineered workspaces for 'everyone'.

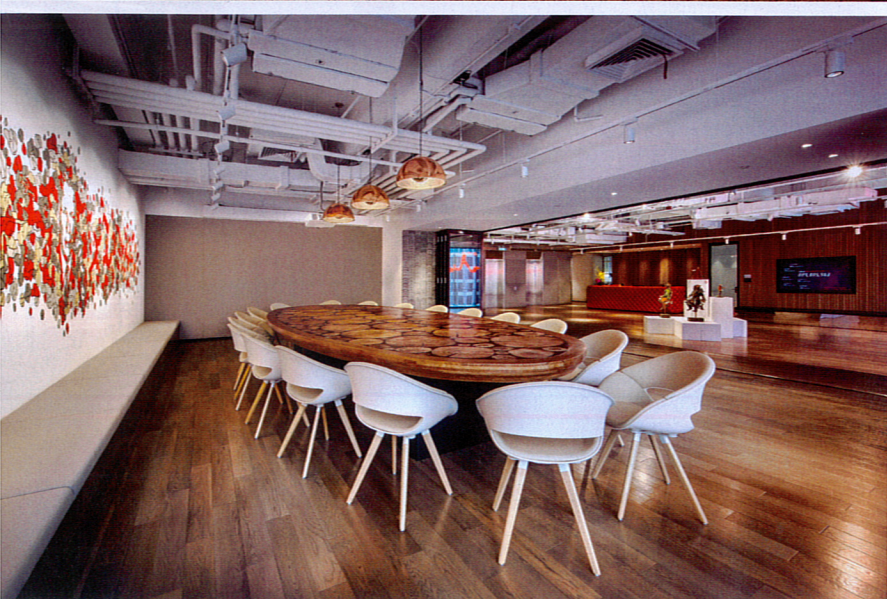
We could also pick randomly from their hundreds long client and 5000+ project list (www.mmoser.com/clients), noting adidas, BASF, Coca Cola, Dow Jones, Ernst & Young, Ford, GlaxoSmithKline, Hewlett-Packard... without getting to 'Z', the point becomes clear. The world's largest companies choose M Moser to "create workspaces for global business", to borrow their slogan.

On their 35th anniversary, we sat down with Chairman and Founder, Moira Moser, to learn how just one company becomes the 'go to' for global workspace creation. On entering M Moser's relatively new office in Changning district, after a recent office upgrade, we were led to meet Moira who was busy in convivial conversation with the Shanghai staff.

After brief introductions, we sat down to begin the interview, and it was obvious that Moira is a people person as she made sure that the setting, chairs and arrangement worked for us, checking that the photographer was happy and that everyone was satisfied.

As she had arrived to Shanghai that day, in preparation for the 35th anniversary bash, we were curious as to Moira's ongoing involvement in the very many different projects that M Moser handles globally. "While I'm not involved in the design of specific projects, I stay completely in communication with our people and offices. I stay in touch with all of the key staff, to understand what's happening and provide insights."





This passion for the basic but often overlooked quality of listening and understanding is the pillar that has supported and developed M Moser's success over the years.

"Taking a common approach or having a 'house design' is not how we work. Not only are clients unique, but their goals and what they want to achieve are unique," explained Moira, "and it's not only about how they work now, but it's about their objectives and how they want to work. We create environments to fully support that. One firm is not like another. So I suppose that our common methodology is that we need to understand the unique aspects of each client, in all senses."

Do M Moser's working practices also give it the edge? Is it a case of HR skill in seeking out the most talented designers, or does an in-house culture create the special qualities that have satisfied so many huge corporations?

"We also take on small projects, which is what we are able to do where others are not. We are open-minded, so we look for people who share that same openness, people who are eager to try new things and be passionately team-oriented. The main aspect is a collaborative spirit. Architects, designers, engineers all collaborate, and not only within one office. Our use of communications technology means that we can communicate between offices at all times. It's an integrated discipline, where other firms may still have the traditional mindsets of each discipline focusing only on their own specialty."

So they fall back on traditional mindsets, perhaps as that's just the easiest thing to do?

"The industry has been this way for decades. Actually integration is key to our success because each discipline interacts with the other when overcoming obstacles."

In terms of construction trends, what's coming in this year and next? But moreover, where have M Moser recently set the trends; what has brought Moira most pride in recent work?

"Sustainability is now crucial. LEED certification is becoming a vital aspect of responsibility and modernity for all companies, international and Chinese. But the next step after sustainability is wellness. A new 'Well' certification is entering the industry, with one of certified projects in China being achieved by M Moser. Wellness is critical for the workplace because people need a place to work that supports their wellbeing in order to be effective. It's about the ergonomics, light, air, water, all the aspects of the environment. Talented people need a reason to select their career location, so wellness is a vital business aspect."

And on international and Chinese companies, do their workplace needs still differ, based on either cultural feelings, or practical differences in working systems?

"Today, the local entrepreneurs and Chinese businesses are eager to explore their own way of working. A



creative and open workplace is important for the new generation of Chinese clients. While some companies can retain traditional working systems, for example perhaps an accounting firm, many other new industries are primarily entrepreneurial and creative. They need a workplace to offer many different landscapes. The young generation does not want to sit at one fixed desk. They want variety. Just as you see in our office here, we have a variety of environments and landscapes for people to choose."

"It is another factor in what we provide to clients – not only the workspace, but bringing in change management to look at their needs and capabilities for now and the future, to create organic ways for them to succeed at what they do and to optimise their working strategies."

Our research had also shown us that M Moser Associates is proud to talk about the personal side of the service, the passion of the team to go one step further for the client. Did Moira have any examples of this?

"Yes," she said, with a wry smile, "every time! There are always challenges, and we overcome them. There are many instances when we not only design a



workspace, but we look at the full working process of their business and help them to see even more opportunities that they can develop by creating a workspace that supports this. It's above and beyond straightforward construction and what we are asked to do. It's based on our drive to help, to innovate, and to create healthy environments so that our client's business, and their people, can succeed."