

# Architect and Builder

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## 8 Merchant Place

CORPORATE OFFICE DEVELOPMENT AWARD



Situated at the corner of Rivonia Road and Fredman Drive in Sandton, 8 Merchant Place is the latest addition in an almost 30 year history of intervention on the Merchant Place site.

The brief from the client was to consolidate certain employee wellbeing offerings into one integrated building. This was primarily driven to start with by a desire to increase the gym size, which was at the time situated in the 9 Fredman Drive building and to also introduce an EduCentre for use by staff.

As the project team began looking at the placement of the new building on the piazza site within the campus, they realised that there was a bigger opportunity to also accommodate the existing Wellness Centre, which would have a synergy with the gym, as well as a new venue that could be used for internal and client events.

The new building is a relatively modest architectural insertion size-wise, but will be experientially significant in the day to day activities of staff and visitors. At its core it is a building that ensures that the surrounding campus is utilised to its maximum efficiency by pulling non-core functions out of these and rearranging them into one space. This complex brief is 'poured' into the piazza that sits between the existing buildings. The building expresses itself as a series of undulating horizontal planes that hover over the piazza space, with clear glazing inbetween to ensure maximum light penetration into the new spaces.

A distinctively reactive architectural language has been developed that sinuously fills the space while using the existing structural grid from the parking basement below. The new structure purposefully contrasts the architecture that is there; its curvaceous shape opening new spatial opportunities between itself and the existing built form.

The building uses a minimal palette of external finishes to emphasise its dynamic shape. The clear glazing is framed above and below by a triangular section and pearlescent white aluminium 'sill' detail that traces each of the curvilinear slab edges. This is offset by Tyrolean plaster on the minimal solid panels.

The new building is an extension of the existing RMB ThinkSpace precinct, a publicly accessible art exhibition space that inhabits the spaces between the buildings at Merchant Place. The building is designed and constructed in line with Green Star SA principles and has recently achieved a 4-Star certification under the Public and Education Building scheme.

Architecturally, the building is designed around the basement grid layout - which all the Merchant Place buildings are based on - which creates a direct connection to the historical buildings, while showing how the same structural base can yield very different architectural results depending on how you approach it.

The different uses that the architects wanted to incorporate into the building all had their own unique design requirements and the building needed to be flexible enough to accommodate all of these while also remaining economically viable. This was achieved by creating a central services core that then supplied the various different use areas on the different floors, freeing up the bulk of the floor plate.

**Client:** FirstRand

**Developer:** Eris Property Group

**Architect, Urban Design,**

**Landscape & Interior Design:**

Boogertman + Partners

**Project Manager:** Metrum Project Management

**Quantity Surveyor:** Vusela Consulting

**Civil, Structural, Wet Services &**

**Green Star Consultant:** Zutari

**Electrical Engineer:** Claassen Auret Inc

**Mechanical Engineer:**

Adaptive Resource Engineers

**Main Contractor:** Trencon Construction





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