

ARCHITECTURE

THE NEW SKYSCRAPER

The conventional skyscraper is a closed, inhospitable environment little better than a stack of concrete trays — or so says Malaysian architect Dr. Ken Yeang, whose defining metaphor of the high-rise as a “tea strainer” has influenced an entire generation of buildings throughout Southeast Asia, Great Britain, and Germany. His designs allow sun and wind to flow through a building, embracing the natural climate as an advantage rather than sealing it out as an enemy. He enhances this open dynamic of permeable boundaries with many transitional areas — such as recessed balconies, large skycourts, and open-air atriums with louvered coverings — further blurring the distinction between inside and outside space. Living vegetation often bolsters his structures in a system of hanging, vertical, or spiraling gardens used for shading and filtering.

The principle of “bioclimatic architecture” (the use of external conditions for internal climate control), informs all of Yeang’s work; his buildings contribute to their own environment, producing energy rather than merely consuming it. The benefits are economical, ecological, and psychological: not only do Yeang’s buildings save money on heating and air conditioning, but they support sustainable development and the emotional well-being of those who live and work in them.

Pictured here, Yeang’s EDITT Tower in Singapore (under construction since 1998) creates vertical continuity with connected ramps that allow pedestrians to ascend the tower along a climbing internal “street” lined with sky gardens, terraces, exhibition and performance spaces, cafés, shops, and offices. Bridges to adjoining buildings reinforce the lower levels as public territory, ensuring a steady flow of people — and their social energy — upward into the building. An integrated arrangement for sun shades, window glazing, light shelves, rainwater catchment scallops, and photovoltaic panels combine to reduce solar load on the windows, collect water, bounce light onto the ceilings and back into the building, and reduce overall energy demand and cooling load.

Yeang has authored numerous books on sustainable architectural design, including *The Green Skyscraper* and *Designing with Nature*, and has held professorships at major universities around the world. With his headquarters in Kuala Lumpur and affiliate offices in Beijing, Sydney, Shenzhen, London, and Stuttgart, this 55-year-old visionary has reached an authority of truly global proportions. GEOFFREY COFFEY

