

# SILVER CLOUD

The Guangzhou Arena has been designed from the outset to be truly multipurpose, with an integrated entertainment district to one side



The Guangzhou Arena's form was inspired by a local folk tale about five clouds that saved the city from famine

**D**esign on the Guangzhou Arena began in August 2008 and construction is due to be completed in September 2010, in time for the Asian Games. MANICA Architecture led the design of the project from initiation through the early phases of detailed design. The company remains involved as design director of the project in coordination with the Guangzhou Design Institute. The design team includes MKA (structural engineering); SSR (MEP, fire protection and ice systems); WJHW (AV and technology); Cini-Little (food and beverage); and WP Moore (traffic and parking engineering).

It is planned that the arena will host a variety of international sport and entertainment events. The 74,000m<sup>2</sup> arena will have a capacity of 18,000 for basketball, and also include a practice court, large retail store and a public restaurant. "House reduction systems, retractable seating systems, segregated and secured vertical circulation systems, and multi-use back-of-house programme areas will ensure the building can host any number of international sport and entertainment events," says David Manica of MANICA Architecture. "Flexibility remains one of the driving principals in the design of these facilities. It's becoming increasingly important to consider the way the house reduction and building systems can be optimised for smaller crowds to broaden the event programming opportunities."

Upon arrival at the subway stop at the south-west corner of the site, guests are greeted by a grand

entry plaza including lush natural landscapes and sculptural canopies that provide shade. The plaza also includes basketball courts for community play. The flowing curves of the site are translated into the building's exterior, which is inspired by a local folk tale that tells of five colourful clouds that delivered immortals on rams to save the city from famine.

Inside the arena guests are greeted by a spacious grand concourse, high ceilings and direct access to their seats in the lower seating area. Each seat has been designed to maximise comfort and views for all guests, and the concourses incorporate a wide variety of food and beverage concessions, with a large number of restroom facilities.

A private and secure parking area is directly linked to the arena's VIP level, allowing VIP guests to enter the building from a separate and secure entrance directly from their cars. At no point will VIP guests be required to leave the privacy of their membership seating areas and lounges. There will be 2,800 VIP club seats, and VIP Club patrons will also have exclusive access to private bar and club areas directly behind their seats. The two VIP lounges are finished with bars, furniture, concessions, and restroom facilities. At an even higher level of exclusivity, the suite level is completely separated from the rest of the seating areas and includes 60 luxurious boxes. Each suite box has a seating area, a small kitchen where guests can order from various menu items served by a personal in-box attendant, and a private bathroom.

Back-of-house and service areas have also been given exceptional attention. There are multiple truck docks to ease loading and serviceability, spacious dressing room and team locker facilities, large cooking kitchens, and a vast network of private service hallways and elevators.

Immediately to the west of the arena there are plans for a 250,000m<sup>2</sup> integrated entertainment district including dining, bars, clubs, a hotel, banquet and meeting facility, shopping mall and cineplex. The concept design of this development was also led by MANICA Architecture. "We are now seeing the coupling of these multifunctional facilities with neighbouring commercial entertainment developments. The synergy of the two together helps ensure each other's broader success," says Manica. ■