

Of cities, skylines and souls

it because we will soon have in the Philippines a legacy building that will live beyond our generation,” he said.

Of many firsts

Century Spire is a development of many firsts. Not only is it the first residential-office tower to be designed by Architect Libeskind and Armani/Casa in the Philippines, but it is also the first whose name will have the Century Properties’ esteemed brand.

“This is the first time that we have put our name in a building that is mixed-used, while all our other [developments] are pure residential. We also decided to eventually relocate our offices here because we actually want to experience the building ourselves,” Robbie explained.

“Undisputedly, this is our most significant project. The architecture is beautiful, and the [interior] design of Armani is spectacular,” he added.

Century Spire will also be the last of eight towers to rise at Century City. The others are Knightsbridge Residences, Milano Residences, and Trump Tower, which will see completion in December 2014, 2015 and 2016, respectively. The Gramercy Residences was turned over in 2012.

Completing these residential properties is the newly opened Century City Mall, and Centuria Medical

Makati and the Forbes Media Tower, which both open their doors very soon.

Among all these major developments, Century Spire will stand as the community’s centerpiece, with 500 residential units varying from to one-, two- and three-

bedroom apartments to penthouses, duplexes and suites. These units will occupy the upper part of the tower, while the lower third will be devoted to office spaces and amenities including a lobby, library, swimming pool, juice bar and relaxation area.

Spire’s story

With such excitement and expectation building up around Century Spire, how did Libeskind make sure his masterpiece for the Philippines is a one-of-a-kind tower?

In describing his design process, Libeskind said that he first studied the site not only in a geographical manner but also through culture and history. He did so in order to create a kind of “architecture that communicates.”

He shared, “The language of architecture does not communicate with words but with materials, with light, with proportions, with its sense of being. Those are the means that one uses and what I used to create the Century Spire.”

When asked what sets this building apart from his previous works, Libeskind replied, “I think it is not only unique [from] my [other] works; it is completely unique to the world. To my knowledge, there is no such building that has the

drama of recalibrated spire.”

“Recalibrated spire” refers to the way the tower expands as it rises. At the top of the 245-meter building is a dramatic crown: three interlocking shafts in different heights. The architect likens this form to a tree.

The diagonally braced structure of Century Spire, meanwhile, creates distinctive spaces and floor plans. The tower is clad in a semi-reflective glass curtain wall, articulated with balconies and terraces that create a geometric pattern.

Libeskind poetically continued, “Architecture has to tell a story, but often it is not a story we know about. It is something not as visible as the building [itself]. The story of creativity, surrounding, sights, lights and colors. All those make up the shape, the character of a tower.”

On the part of Century Properties, Jose responded, “When we produce any residences or offices, we look at the long-term satisfaction of our buyers. Because owning a unit, a residence, or a flat in an iconic building such as Century Spire will give them a fantastic experience, comfort, elegance, and of course, the bragging rights of having an Armani/Casa and Daniel Libeskind home.”

Green features

Libeskind was also proud of the sustainability efforts he featured in the design of Century Spire. “I think you cannot design today without thinking deeply about sustainable green design,” he emphasized.

Among the “green” features of the building, as Libeskind began, “First of all, the fact that it is a tall building already makes it sustainable because we are not spreading development into a large footprint.”

He went on to talk about the importance of using quality materials like insulated glass and highly-efficient lighting systems to reduce the property’s energy consumption.

Water will also be recycled and reused for other purposes such as landscaping, for example.

“The way that we will cool the building is through [distribution of] air cooling condensers rather than a large centralized [cooling] plant. [There are also] the ventilated façades where windows can be opened for natural air to flow in,” he added. “All these to make the lowest possible carbon footprint.”

More importantly, Libeskind added, “But there is much more to sustainability. Sustainability is memory. It is also maintained and passed on from generation to generation.”

Words for the young

College architectural students who attended the groundbreaking of Century Spire were also given the chance to interact with Libeskind.

“There is an amazing new generation of [aspiring] architects in this room. I am always jealous of young architects because the world is waiting for their ideas,”

the world-class architect acknowledged.

Asked what he thought of Philippine architecture, Libeskind answered, “When one sees the skyline developing very, very rapidly, one sees the need to really address questions of living. How to create a great city in terms of pedestrian, infrastructure, transportation [for] the millions of people living [in it]? But how can it be done?”

“It cannot be done just by engineers. It cannot be done just by calculations. It has to be done with a sense of a thought, of a poetic idea. Here in the Philippines, it also has to connect the deep memory of tradition of a place to the future,” he continued.

“You take the necessary risks to go forward, to invent things that have never been known before. Because only when one is daring and bold, one can do something new.”

With that, Libeskind remembered the great Leonardo da Vinci, whom he made a sculpture for in Milan, Italy. For the architect, da Vinci was “never resting in the past but always thinking of something new.”

“That is my advice to young architectures. Don’t just look into magazines and what has been done. Go off and take a risk. Don’t worry if people criticize you. Don’t worry if people think you’re crazy. You’ll ultimately succeed.”

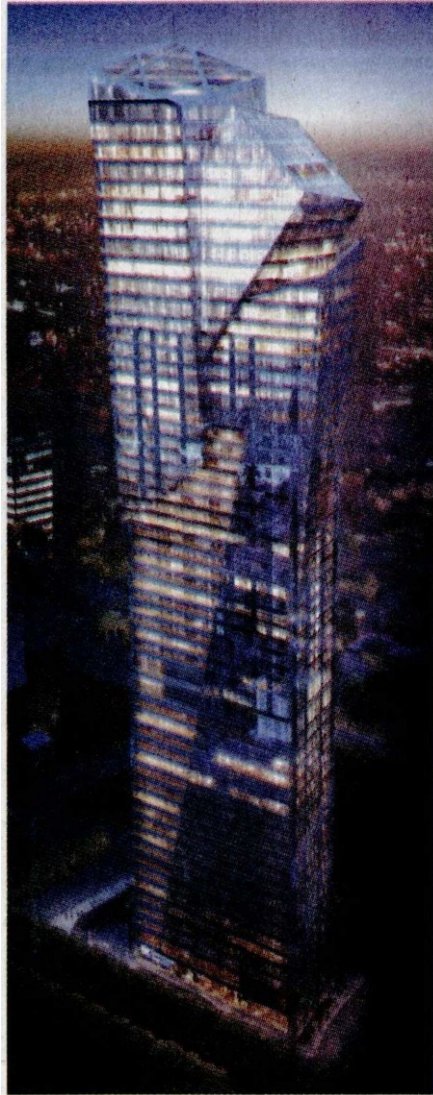
Libeskind then went on to discuss the concept of “center of the world.”

“Every place that I’ve ever been to, people think that that’s the center of the world. This was true for New York, Milan, Ohio, China. When you think about it, you begin to ask, ‘What is the center of the world?’ ‘Where is it?’

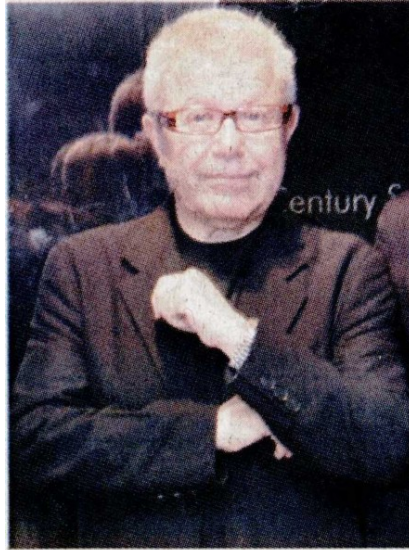
“It’s where the soul is. It’s really where the heart lies and what the heart desires. Where there is a connection to something bigger than we are. For me, that connection is made between the spirit of architecture and humankind,” Libeskind ended.



■ Century Spire project head Robbie Antonio, Architect Daniel Libeskind, and Century Properties chairman and CEO Jose Antonio



■ Century Spire is a glass-clad, 60-floor residential and office tower set to rise in 2018 at Century City



■ Architect Daniel Libeskind