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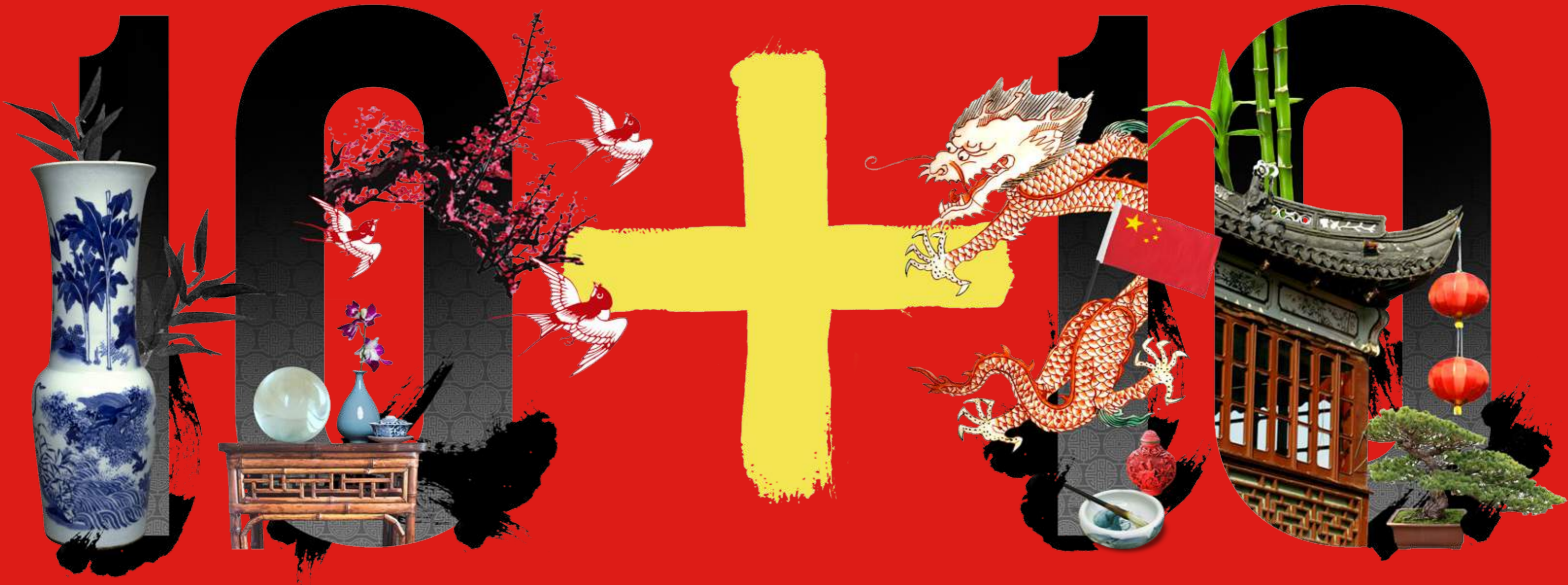
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After establishing itself as a leading brand communications and PR consultancy in Hong Kong, CatchOn expanded to China in 2007. In the 10 years since then, CatchOn has dished up creative strategies for China's best chefs and restaurateurs, opened the door for new hotel groups to enter the local market and housed global architecture firms and interior designers in our portfolio.

It's been a busy, rewarding and – *yes, occasionally* – challenging 10 years. Through our offices in Shanghai and Beijing, we've had the privilege of seeing firsthand China's cultural shifts and growing global influence. Our decade in China has been marked by a boom in outbound tourism, a burgeoning middle class and a new appreciation for contemporary art and design. In the next 10 years we're expecting exponential growth in these areas.

We're inspired by China's future. And in China, the future lies in design. Creative enterprises are flourishing, innovative artists are being celebrated and upcoming design projects are attracting rapturous attention from the world's media. To celebrate CatchOn's tenth anniversary in China, we've consulted the innovators and trailblazers, the movers and mavericks to identify the people and trends who are shaping the future of China's design industry.

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In presenting this trend report, CatchOn hopes to spark discussion, profile China's most innovative talents and identify the projects and people we'll be talking about for the next 10 years.

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Over the last few decades, life in China has been all about growth and progress. With the pace of life increasing and consumerism driving society forward, there is a growing desire to bring more depth and meaning to life. This cultural resurgence – or Mini Renaissance if you like – has people looking for a more balanced lifestyle, one that enriches the mind and benefits the spirit through literature, art and cultural pursuits.

RENAISSANCE RISING



1

- ① Fangsuo Commune Chengdu © Lee Kuo Min
- ② Fangsuo Commune Chengdu © Chu Chih Kang
- ③ Li Garden Tea House

As the new literati rises, design is a valuable tool in both the private and public realms. China has always been a nation of literature lovers; and contemporary bookstores that also function as cultural hubs are drawing culture vultures in droves. Mao Jihong's cavernous, design-savvy Fangsuo Commune in Guangzhou and Chengdu's Taikoo shopping malls (the former boasts over 90,000 books) are part-bookstore, library, café, lifestyle retail hub and creative meeting point. These micro-cultural spaces bring people together in an atmosphere of learning.

In Yangzhou, interior architecture studio XL-Muse's bookshop for retailer Zhongshuge has won awards for its modernist design inspired by the Chinese literary romance novel *A Dream of Red Mansions* by Cao Xueqin, which is thought to refer to the bookshop's current location. A black-mirrored floor and two walls of arched shelving create an optical illusion of a cylindrical tunnel of books while the arched shelving supposedly represents the famous 24 bridges in Xueqin's verse.

Teahouses, too, are ripe for a makeover. Since the Tang Dynasty, the teahouse has been essential to self-cultivation, a place to share ideas, promote conviviality and civility. Shanghai-based architects Atelier Deshaus built a Zen-like meditative teahouse in the corner of a downtown courtyard called Li Garden, focusing the structure on an existing paulownia tree. Translucent glass, a floating steel roof-line and a 45cm cantilever surround the building, allowing the small, light and airy space to interact with nature. Scholarly living also inspired Shanghai-based artist Ann Niu who used *Scholar Stones*, or *gongshi*, to inspire her latest collection of abstract calligraphic works called *Microcosm*. Traditional stone attributes of color, shape, markings, surface and sound are rendered in vivid colors and fluid lines through Niu's brushstrokes.



2



3

Art museums that draw global and local masters have been popping up across the country, much to the delight of the country's museum-going public. Noteworthy are heavy hitters like the Long Museum West Bund and Yuz Museum on Shanghai's West Bund Cultural Corridor as well as those more further afield, including the sculptural Museum of Contemporary Art Yinchuan in Western China designed by Beijing firm WAA. Japanese architectural studio Maki and Associate's much-discussed Shekou Design Museum is due to open this year in Shenzhen. The museum is a first-of-its-kind partnership between developer China Merchants Shekou Holdings (CMSK) and London's prestigious V&A museum, part of a larger complex called the Sea World Culture and Arts Centre. Hopes are high that bringing such a world-class institution to China will promote cross-fertilization with the rest of the world. The future of culture looks bright. ☹



Wellness design and architecture are high on agendas this year. Design plays a significant role in human health, both biological and neurological, from basic environmental factors like daylight, air filtration and sound, to more specific personal likes and dislikes. How our environment looks and feels is integral to our well being. These days there is even a term for designing for wellness – ‘salutogenic’ design – and it’s the ultimate investment in people.

WELLNESS BY DESIGN

PG. 06

Creating healthy living spaces as an antidote to the stresses of modern urban living is critical, especially in burgeoning Chinese cities, many of which struggle with the growing pains of rapid development – endless construction, traffic congestion, overcrowding and, of course, pollution. Working towards a world in which our built and living environments are sustainable and make us feel good is a challenge gaining traction with both Chinese and international designers.

As buildings get taller and cities denser, it is vital to instill a sense of community and nature into architecture. Beijing-based Ma Yan Song of MAD Architects designed the undulating Fake Hills apartment complex in the coastal city of Beihai to look like the surrounding mountains, a visual standard-bearer in the fight against those standardized housing blocks of Mainland cities.



1

In Taiwan, the 21-storey Tao Zhu Yin Yuan carbon-eating tower by Vincent Callebaut Architectures of Paris is due for completion this fall. Shaped like the double helix pattern of human DNA, the tower is covered in 23,000 trees and shrubs in a bid to help purify the city's air. Experts say this is a small but significant step forward in eco-friendly architectural design.

WELLNESS BY DESIGN

The bucolic natural scenery and meandering waterways of the Xixi Wetlands in Hangzhou appeal to those who want to get back to nature. A new 40-unit floating village-style residential project by British firm David Chipperfield Architects taps into the ancient appeal of living on the water. Canals weave in and around the complex, with dark stone cubic buildings rising like floating monuments. Large windows welcome nature in, shutters filter direct sunlight, and the waterscape acts as a cooling agent to counteract the summer heat and humidity. Also in Hangzhou, on scenic Qiandao Lake, is the Ripple Hotel – the name inspired by the movement of the water on the lake – with Bauhaus-style architecture by German firm GMP and interiors by Shanghai firm XL-Muse. Here, the 12 duplex villas reflect a microcosm of Hangzhou's natural landscape, incorporating natural materials like woven bamboo, wood, and splashes of muted color.



2

Wellness design and architecture is also about creating experiences. Calvin Tsao of New York-based Tsao & McKown Architects knows this well and has recently created the Sangha Retreat by Octave (in collaboration with Shanghai-based wellness developer Octave), set on 47 acres overlooking Yangcheng Lake near Suzhou.

An all-encompassing wellness retreat of private houses, apartments and two hotels, Tsao conceived Sangha's master plan, buildings and spaces to encourage both congregation and quiet individual introspection, mindfulness, and self-expression. Inside Sangha, the Fellow Traveler hotel centers on learning experiences – with a lecture hall, seminar and conference rooms (large and small) designed to encourage the exchange of ideas. The At One hotel centers on mind-body wellness – with a spa, fitness center, and studios for meditation, yoga, and more. Also offered are medical consultation services, an aesthetic clinic, and health-conscious dining options.

Tsao's design inspirations are rooted in Eastern wisdom, especially Confucian ideas of relationships with self, community, society, and nature. His family, too, has long valued cultural sustainability, especially in these times of socio-economic and technological transformation. He wants to eventually bring his work with Octave to other markets outside of China, and has his eye on upstate New York. "We're trying to take Confucianism out of the specific conditions of being a Chinese philosophy and take it to a more universal place," he said. "These principles can apply to design almost anywhere." ⊖

① ② *Sangha Retreat*

The allure of craftsmanship and craft techniques – and the movement to revive traditional crafts in danger of disappearing altogether – is driving design forward in China. Heritage and history are being reimagined to suit modern lifestyles, carving new paths for design thinking.

CRAFTSMANSHIP: THE REAL DEAL





1

Designers everywhere – especially those in the craft-based luxury goods industry – agree that authenticity and respect for the story behind the product is one of the cornerstones of good design. So it is no surprise that China’s rich craft history offers inspiration for designers and artists who fuse heritage techniques with a fresh vision. All across the country they are searching out and working with elite craftsmen and women, many of whom have skills in danger of being lost forever. When these skills regain relevance for modern living, it’s a win-win situation for both designers and artisans. Preservation through innovation, some say.

Beijing-born Shao Fan was one of the first contemporary Chinese artists and designers to be recognized overseas for embracing Chinese crafts and culture. Known for his deconstructed wood and acrylic chairs that blend Ming Dynasty forms with clean, geometric lines, his works stand as testimony to China’s modern transformation. Today, his chairs are in the permanent collection of the V&A in London where he has the accolade of being the first contemporary Chinese artist to be exhibited in the museum.

Luxury lifestyle label Shang Xia is making waves both at home and overseas (with stores in China and France), by blending fine Chinese craftsmanship with a cool modern aesthetic. The Hermès-backed brand led by artistic director and CEO Jiang Qiong Er (a former artist and designer herself), mixes traditional know-how with modern innovation to create ceramics, furniture, homeware, jewelry and apparel which ooze soul and integrity. Shang Xia’s sleek *Da Tian Di* carbon fiber chair is a traditional Ming dynasty-style chair that has been reinterpreted in hi-tech carbon, weighing in at just 2.7kg. Super delicate eggshell porcelain *Echo* bowls, less than 0.5mm thick – a wonder of craft and technology – are fired in kilns at 1,200 degrees Celcius, with each piece taking two months to produce.



2

① *Da Tian Di Chair* by Shang Xia

② *UN/FOLD Blue Batik Stools* © The Fabrick Lab

③ *UN/FOLD Blue Batik Sofa* © The Fabrick Lab

CRAFTSMANSHIP: THE REAL DEAL



3

PG. 09

Regional ethnic craft inspirations are also making news, both in terms of design and social impact. Hong Kong-based Elaine Ng Yan Ling of the Fabrick Lab was inspired by visits to Southern China’s mountainous region of Guizhou to design a new furniture collection. Fascinated with local Guizhou fabric and dyeing methods, Ng developed a social project called *UN/FOLD*, creating a workable system to market the craftsmanship of local female artisan weavers who had never heard of “design”. Ng’s subsequent *UN/FOLD* furniture uses local Guizhou wood and batik patterns. Such partnerships inspire both parties: Ng gets design inspirations and the local community receives an income and a reaffirmation of cultural identity. It is hoped that through projects such as these, young people may be enticed back home and the valuable handicraft heritage of ethnic minorities will endure. ⊖

RENOVATION AND RENEWAL

Making the old new again, and finding value in that which has gone before, both inspire and challenge China's designers. Repurposing or adaptively reusing buildings – be they heritage, industrial or residential – takes skill, sensitivity, a discerning eye, and plenty of imagination.



P G . 10

Renovation provides continuity with the past and enriches the present. Take, for example, the new Aman resort Amanyangyun, due to open this fall in Shanghai. Amanyangyun will be home to 50 Ming and Qing dynasty homes and a forest of 10,000 camphor trees, which were shipped 800 kilometres from Jiangxi province.

The heritage homes and trees were threatened by a construction of a new reservoir, so concerned Jiangxi businessman Ma Dadong worked with architecture specialists, engineers, craftsmen, and botanists to bring them to Maqiao town, the site of the new Aman resort. The project took 10 years to complete. The houses have now become 26 villas and 24 one-bedroom suites with interiors by Australian architect Kerry Hill who blended old and new with a minimal palette of bamboo, wood, and stone.



Chinese luxury resort Ahn Luh Zhujiajiao in Shanghai gives cultural treasures new life and purpose. Owner Qing Tongqian is a well-known preservationist and antiques collector and made the resort's centerpiece a 600-year-old Huizhou-style Ming dynasty mansion that was dismantled in Anhui Province, moved to Zhujiajiao in pieces, then rebuilt and restored. In addition, a late Qing-era opera theatre was moved from Jiangxi Province to the site, and Malaysian architect Nicholas Fung designed 35 contemporary villas, with input from local craftsmen.

Further north, inside the Qianmen Beijing Center for the Arts, architect Kengo Kuma and Associates renovated classical courtyard houses, dismantling, repairing and reassembling them with the help of local carpenters in a bid to rejuvenate the area as a local community. The facades remain, with the addition of glass walls overlain by jigsaw puzzle-like aluminium screens that evoke the traditional *huagechuang* Chinese latticework. Kuma hopes the project will revive the idea of using repurposed low-rise housing to meet the demands of today's urban living needs, such as offices, cafes, and hotels.

Former factories are ripe for redevelopment too. Shanghai-based architectural firm Neri & Hu recently converted a former Beijing missile-manufacturing factory into a mixed-use program with café, offices, and automobile workshop. 'The Garage' aptly references the city's notorious traffic problems, and Neri & Hu retained the industrial character of the building by adding a new steel frame structure, mezzanine platforms, mirrored surfaces, raw steel-edged glass garage doors, plus warming walnut wood and brushed bronze.

RENOVATION AND RENEWAL

P G . 1 1

Creative businesses can benefit from alliances with heritage properties. Award-winning Shanghai architectural firm Kokai Studios, well-known for their urban regeneration projects, converted a 1920s historical villa for Shanghai-based Haute Couture brand Grace Chen. The elegant villa conversion, plus new glass pavilion display space in the grounds, gives Chen's brand an aura of exclusivity, refinement and character which would be challenging to find in a new-build locale. ⊖

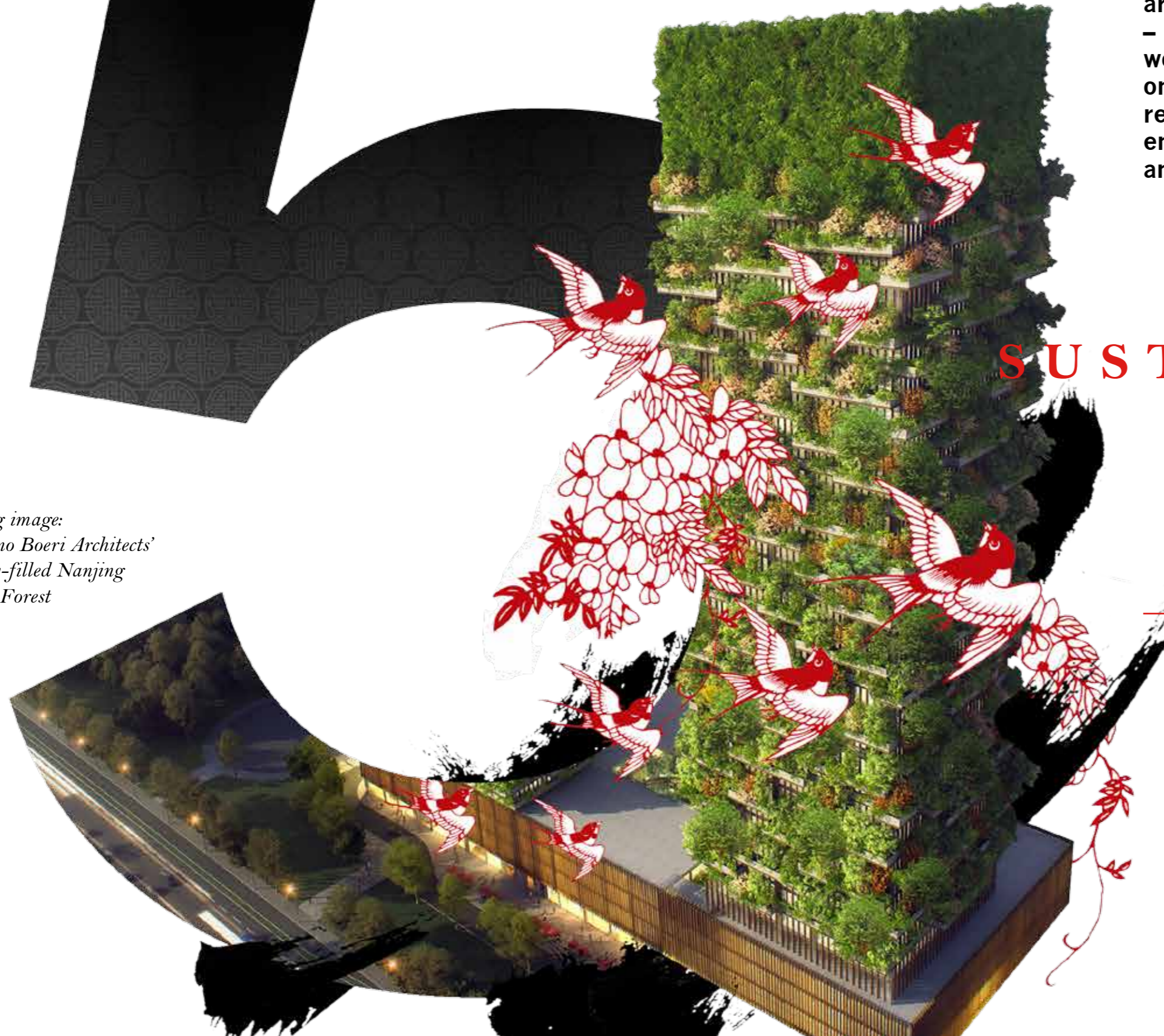


- ① Ahn Luh Zhujiajiao © Ahn Luh (Beijing)
Hotel Management Co. Ltd
② 'The Garage' © Neri & Hu

Environmental challenges are prompting architects and designers to work hard to reduce – and even eliminate – their impact on the world around us. In a sustainable age, reducing one’s environmental footprint, using renewable resources and reconnecting to the natural environment, are increasingly important at home and work.

SUSTAINABILITY FIRST

*Building image:
© Stefano Boeri Architects'
greenery-filled Nanjing
Vertical Forest*



Some design thinkers advise that we should pay less attention to ‘form follows function’ and instead concentrate on ‘form follows environment’ in a bid to create meaningful projects that positively impact human behavior. This rings particularly true in China where decades of development have led to stresses (pollution, congestion, industrial production) which negatively impact health and lifestyles.

Yet China has always embraced innovation and it is heartening to see this played out in eco-aware projects currently underway. Stefano Boeri Architects’ greenery-filled Nanjing Vertical Forest, backed by Nanjing’s Yang Zi State-owned National Investment Group, is one example. The project, inspired by Boeri’s Bosco Verticale project in Milan (2014), will be the first Vertical Forest built in Asia when it is completed in 2018.

Two plant-clad towers (the tallest 200 meters high) form the centerpiece of the 6,000-square-meter site that contains 600 tall trees and 500 medium sized trees (23 local species) as well as 2,500 cascading plants and shrubs. Aside from regenerating local biodiversity, the Vertical Forest will provide about 25 tons of CO₂ absorption each year and about 60 kg of oxygen per day.



1



2

S U S T A I N A B I L I T Y F I R S T

Inbuilt bioclimatic features help reduce energy and water consumption. When American architecture firm Perkins & Will designed the Shanghai Natural History Museum they saved 15% on energy consumption compared to a standard-design museum by including automated windows and skylights to naturally ventilate public areas and installing a geothermal heat pump which reduced heating needs by a staggering 86.2%.

On a more modest scale, a rundown cave house in Weinan, Shaanxi province, was renovated by architect Shi Yang of hyperSity who used the energy-efficient elements of traditional cave design (warm in winter, cool in summer) as the basis for his redesign. Shi preserved the existing arched walls and used rammed earth (mixing local clay and sand) for construction, redesigning the interior as a series of courtyard spaces and punching a circular glass light well in the northernmost area for additional natural light and ventilation. His use of local materials meant the modernized home integrated well into the locale.

Sustainable design was also the starting point for Beijing architectural firm OPEN’s new modular building system HEX-SYS. The award-winning project – a prototype of which was recently built in Guangzhou for developer Vanke – is composed of hexagonal units which can be disassembled and re-configured according to different site and programmatic needs. Light, industrialized, flexible, energy-efficient, and reusable, HEX-SYS comes in three different unit types, each sitting lightly on the ground. A central column supports the funnel-shaped roof and collects rainwater at the same time.



3

Birdlife is also on China’s eco radar. Australian landscape architects McGregor Coxall are working on a ‘bird airport’ scheme, a 60-hectare wetland sanctuary in the northern city of Tianjin. The Lingang Eco Park project will transform a landfill site into an urban forest along the East Asian-Australasian flyway, where 50 million birds make the return journey from the Arctic Circle to Australia and New Zealand. Three different water habitats, a hi-tech research center, and a renewable energy system to move recycled and harvested rainwater, will give birds a place to rest and breed – and provide new green lungs for Tianjin city. ☹

① Nanjing Vertical Forest © Stefano Boeri Architects

② ③ HEX-SYS © Zhang Chao

Technology marches ever onwards, constantly adapting and changing the world around us. Computer advancements, virtual and augmented realities, digital environments (including homes with built-in digital layers – not there yet, but surely not far away) both fascinate and inspire.

TECHNOLOGY TODAY

PG. 14



TECHNOLOGY
TODAY

At the heart of technological progress remains the human factor. To succeed, technology has to work hand in hand with our desires, giving us what we need when we need it (or even before we know we need it). Smart technology makes busy lives easier and more efficient, acting as digital companions and becoming integral to our lives.

Through all of these advancements, good design remains crucial to technological success, giving one brand the edge over another in a crowded marketplace. Take the Qiantu K50 electric sports car, China's answer to Tesla. Entrepreneur Lu Qun is currently building a US\$300 million factory near Shanghai to manufacture 50,000 of his own-brand electric vehicles a year, in a bid to inject new vision into the traditional domestic auto market, and perhaps one day compete globally with the auto heavyweights of the United States, Japan and Germany. Feedback for the K50's two-seater light carbon fiber exterior with touch-screen studded console has so far been positive, with reviewers praising its quality, avant-garde design, and sweeping lines.

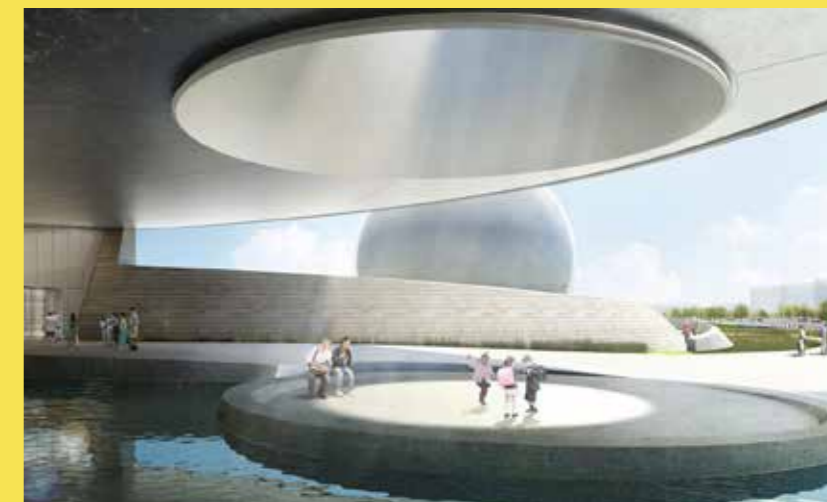
It's all about designing a vision of the future. The architects behind the new Shanghai Planetarium – a branch of the Shanghai Science and Technology Museum – have just broken ground on an ambitious, grand scale 400,000-square-foot building. Thomas Wong and Ennead Architects' colossal construction will house the world's largest planetarium theater, their design concept focusing on planetary objects orbiting in space. It is due for completion in 2020.

Three central forms – the Oculus, the Inverted Dome, and the Sphere – have been designed as theatrical devices to better illustrate the wonders of the universe. Innovative engineering technology makes the building appear as if it is levitating; and it is hoped it will inspire a sense of wonder among visitors. The museum will offer the latest in digital projection technology and, through its exhibits, demonstrate the latest developments in astronomical research.



1

P G . 1 5



2

The planetarium is part of a wider masterplan for Shanghai's Lingang district, which is being developed as a satellite city. Thomas Wong is also working on the Lingang Sci Tech City with Ennead, located not far from the planetarium. The area has been marked by the Shanghai government as an 'Innovation Zone', a place to promote scientific and technological development and reflect the city's commitment to pushing new boundaries in tech advancement. ☹

CREATIVE CO-WORKING

Design-led co-working spaces that offer the chance to do business and network in energizing environments are booming the world over. And it is a trend that China, with its buzzing entrepreneurial mindset, is embracing wholeheartedly.

P G . 1 6



Even only a year ago, a shared workspace often meant renting an expensive cubicle in a mainstream business center, complete with drab interior palette and a long list of restrictions. How things have changed. Shanghai leads the way with a myriad of creative co-working options – and other primary and secondary cities are not far behind. Such popularity is understandable: these new spaces are cost-effective, convenient and well designed, offering a ready-made community in which like-minded souls can work, connect, and even collaborate.

① ② *Linehouse* © Jonathan Leijonhufvud
and *Linehouse*

③ © Marcelo Joulia Naço

P G . 1 7

Technology, of course, has been a big driver. Mobility means flexibility, allowing one to be smart about where we choose to spend our workdays. Hip American operator WeWork (154 offices in 36 cities in 6 countries at the time of writing), has recently launched in China (Shanghai and Beijing), transforming existing buildings into collaborative workspaces. The WeWork Shanghai flagship on Weihai Lu in Jingan District is a former turn-of-the-century opium factory renovated by local design studio Linehouse. With its bold green painted steel structure and pastel-colored terrazzo walls, the light and airy 5,500-square-meter, triple-height space combines old and new, heritage and modern. Hot desks, dedicated desks or private offices are available, and a tropical, retro-oriental themed bar for members is perfect for networking.



1

naked Hub, a fast-growing Shanghai-born operator (part of the wellness-oriented resort company naked Retreats), appeals to a diverse crowd seeking a sense of community. Architect Delphine Yip-Horsfield and her team have designed seven hubs in Shanghai to date. Next up is a mammoth 1,700-desk, 12,200-square-meter 'Mothership' in business district Gubei. Three hubs are planned in Beijing and a Hong Kong flagship is set to open in the first half of 2017. naked has big plans – 24 new Hubs are on the drawing boards across Greater China and Southeast Asia, with hopes to reach 20,000-25,000 'hubbers' by the end of 2017. In true naked fashion, the hubs promote wellness while you work with a whole floor in the Gubei space devoted to wellness facilities and services.



2



3

For a boutique, curated experience, there is new workspace-cum-social club Paper. Founders Jacopo Stecchini and Peipei Huang asked architect and designer Marcelo Joulia Naço to create a sanctuary for modern thinkers. Paper is housed in a renovated 1930s lanehouse with Italian mosaics on the outside and an elegantly curated, streamlined modernist interior, all high-end designer furniture and lighting. Members can retreat to the Dylan room (vintage vinyl and retro antiques) or the Pelican room (Miami art deco modernism) for meetings or catch-ups, or snooze in a hotel suite (perfect for beating pre-presentation jetlag). All members get access to Paper's cultural calendar containing exclusive invitations to events in design, art, film, fashion, and music. In the fast-paced, stress-filled working world of today's China, we have only one thing to say – sign us up! ☹

CREATIVE
CO-WORKING

The influence of Chinese designers outside China is growing rapidly. Rising standards of professionalism and quality, an unwavering commitment to innovation and creativity and increased confidence in the new Chinese aesthetic have allowed designers to reach new levels of achievement.

GOING GLOBAL





1

High-end, limited edition collectables that embrace the highest quality materials and the finest craftsmanship are changing perceptions of what it means to be 'Made in China'. The movement began to gather pace a few years ago at the highest level, when premium auction house Christie's selected designers like Jiang Qiong Er of Shang Xia and Chen Yanfei of Pusu to participate in an inaugural Chinese Contemporary Design auction. Groundbreaking at the time, Christie's took premium-quality furniture pieces on an overseas roadshow to introduce them to the world's finest collectors and allow them to appreciate the craftsmanship and creative vision firsthand. Audiences were intrigued, and global interest continues to grow.

GOING
GLOBAL

Whilst the number of designers able to compete at such a rarified level is still small, numbers are steadily increasing. More and more are continuing to explore the dialogue between modernity and tradition in a bid to fuse traditional techniques with innovative materials. Successful Shanghai-based Studio MVW – known for its sculptural, architectural forms and ability to subtly connect East and West aesthetics – debuted its limited edition *Xiangsheng* brushed bronze collection at PAD Paris and London (the pioneering event for Art and Design aficionados and collectors), and is now represented in Paris by Gallery BSL. New for 2017 is the elegant *Jinshi* collection which combines cloudy pink jade (a natural, precious gemstone with a sumptuous powder-like transparency) within a rose gold-colored framework. Sophisticated and visionary, *Jinshi* marks a further development in the brand's evolution.

PG. 19

Collaborations with leading international brands are an effective way to increase a designer's exposure. Powerhouse Neri & Hu (arguably Shanghai's most well-known architecture and design firm), has long collaborated with brands like Mooi, Stellarworks, and De La Espada. Most recently, their *Supporting Ren* collection for Poltrona Frau won wallpaper* magazine's 2017 Design Award for Best Chinese Takeaway and their elegant *Lantern Light* for German brand ClassiCon (shown at imm Cologne) drew inspiration from Italian designer Vico Magistretti's 1977 minimal ethereal *Lyndon* lamp. A true blend of an East-West global vision.



2

In architecture, it was only five years ago that Chinese architect Wang Shu of Hangzhou-based Amateur Architecture Studio scooped the prestigious Pritzker prize. Past Pritzker laureates have included Frank Gehry (US), Zaha Hadid (UK), Rem Koolhaas (the Netherlands), Renzo Piano (Italy), and Jean Nouvel (France) so Wang Shu's win, especially in the light of his commitment to sustainability and traditional understanding, recognized the role China may one day play in the global future of design. Since then, Chinese architects have gained increased exposure overseas, most recently Beijing-based architectural innovator Ma Yan Song of MAD Architects who is busy designing *Star Wars* creator George Lucas' Museum of Narrative Art in Los Angeles, due to open in 2021. ☹



3

Young, dynamic, and going places: China's emerging design talents (both fresh grads and those busy building new brands) are well worth watching. China's new generation is making its mark most visibly in the product design category, thanks to a surge in the number of design shows (both domestic and international) offering platforms for exposure. Such opportunities give these emerging brands (who often do not have deep pockets) the chance to forge links with manufacturers, make industry and peer alliances, gain media exposure and market their collections to the wider public.

YOUNG TALENTS

*Furniture image:
Feelex Bent Bamboo Furniture
by Gong Qiaolin, Qiu Kushan
and Wang Weijia © China
Academy of Art*



Design Shanghai, launched four years ago and considered Asia's leading international design event, includes the Emerging Chinese Designer Platform, organized in collaboration with *AD China* magazine. Every year, 10 young designers – many sourced from top schools like the China Academy of Art and the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts – compete for the winner's spot. 2017 standouts included Qing Tong Qian, founder of *minimaist*, for her nature-inspired rich hued ceramics, Daishi Luo's colorful bronze plateware and Qiaolin Gong and Weijia Wang's molded wooden furniture. Winner Qing Tong Qian will attend the London Design Festival later in the year to showcase her ceramics to an international audience.



1

Hheavyweight design show Salone del Mobile Milano launched in Shanghai late last year, turning the spotlight on premium Italian craftsmanship. In a bid to also recognize and nurture local creativity, it hosted China's first SaloneSatellite Shanghai, open to designers under 35. SaloneSatellite has been running in Milan since 1998 and many of the 10,000 designers who have taken part since then have gone on to become big names in the design industry. China's 41 fresh talents were judged by an illustrious panel, including architects Alessandro Colombo, Lyndon Neri, and Fabio Novembre. Winners included Fang Gao's light and shadow-inspired wooden sideboard, Weiwei Wu's sculptural bookshelf, and Anqi Tang's 6-block tea table. All three will show at SaloneSatellite Milano in April.



2

Such events serve as key drivers for talent recognition, both inside and outside China. Last year, 14 Chinese homeware designers took part in the London Design Festival, including Chen Fu Rong of *Wuu* and Hongchao Wang and Peng Yo of agency *Benwu*. There was also Gu Qi of Hangzhou-based brand *Fnji*, whose *Kinfolk*-like aesthetic – all streamlined, hand-made wood pieces and character-rich collections – revealed the power of traditional Chinese craftsmanship in a modern context.

① *Bronze Plateware* © Daishi Luo

② *Fnji Furniture*

③ *ZaoZuo, Shanghai* © Zhu Wei

YOUNG TALENTS

As local talents thrive, perceptions of China-made designers are changing too. A young, middle class audience is rising, one which prefers to live with distinctive designs that speak of their own cultural experiences. Technology helps build brand recognition thanks to the popularity of online shopping and digital retailing, which means startups can have easier access to the marketplace without brick-and-mortar stores. Forward-thinking domestic brands like *ZaoZuo* (entrepreneur Shu Wei and creative director Luca Nichetto's affordable China-produced collections), started with digital stores only and are popular with consumers seeking well-made and well-priced stylish designs. ☹



3

PEOPLE
POWER

*Interior image:
NUO, Beijing*



As confidence amongst Chinese consumers grows, conspicuous consumption is beginning to take a backseat to the power of personal experience. Savvy, style-conscious folks are traveling more extensively, making informed purchase and lifestyle choices, and choosing to make deeper connections with the places they visit.

As travelers focus on hunting out boutique experiences – a gem of a boutique hotel known only to insiders or a reservation at the hottest gastronomic place in town for example – they are turning to online platforms for guidance. Luxury online travel agency Zanadu is one of the go-to places for high-end destinations and experiences; and bespoke adventure-led travel agency WildChina's new experiential travel platform Newugo specializes in connecting Chinese travelers to local culture and helping them form enriching experiences.

PEOPLE POWER

And design is a vital tool in helping people to decide where they want to go and what they want to do, especially design that is rooted in culture, history, and local character. More high-end, design-aware domestic hotel operators are exploring Chinese cultural connections for clients looking for personalized luxury and design. Just take a look at state-owned Beijing Tourism Group (BTG), and its modern luxury spin-off hotel brand NUO which has, at its heart, a celebration of Chinese culture or history pertinent to each location.

The first modern-Ming styled NUO opened near Beijing's 798 Art District, featuring stunning contemporary art collections curated by master artist Zeng Fangzhi (who is also the brand's honorary art consultant). Zeng Fangzhi created *Le Shan*, a monumental 2.25 tonne sculpture in silver and bronze, and *Landscape 2014*, a dramatic 6.3-meter by 2.6-meter long abstract oil painting especially for the space. The hotel has since become an art destination in its own right, with visitor response so high that the hotel has produced an in-house magazine about the works on display. The hotel is also preparing an art book for visitors keen to know more about the collections.

Last year, NUO opened a second location overlooking the Forbidden City, taking over the history-rich Raffles Beijing Hotel (the nearest thing, experts say, that Beijing has to a grand dame). If that wasn't impressive enough, NUO has marked international expansion as a priority, bringing Made-in-China luxury to the West and hoping to draw a 50/50 Chinese/overseas guest ratio outside the country. Meanwhile, established private property developer Dalian Wanda resorts group, which currently has 100 hotels (including the high-end Wanda Vista and four-star Wanda Realm) in its portfolio, is also set for global domination with plans for 160 properties around the world by 2020.



1



2

On a more modest scale, upscale local hotel brand CHAO in Beijing's Sanlitun entertainment district embraces communities both near and far. With its upscale, minimal vibe, and lifestyle-led approach, it attracts both travelers and local creatives. A cinema, a co-working space, events calendar, and members-only club widen its appeal, enhancing the quality of life for all its guests.

International brands, too, are tailor-making their offerings to give Chinese guests what they want and need. American hotel visionary Ian Schrager has just opened his first hotel in China with The Sanya EDITION, a sleek beachside hotel that draws on Hainan Island's cultural heritage with a modernist twist. Cleverly designed to cater to multi-generation groups, the resort is carved into activity and entertainment zones, with age-specific pools, a Chinese contemporary art collection and accommodations ranging from a choice of guestrooms, suites, and private villas. Coming up next is a second EDITION for Shanghai – a bespoke offering for fashion-led city slickers. ⊖

① NUO

② The Sanya EDITION



1
**MA
YAN SONG**
EDGY
ORGANICS




2
**SHU
WEI**
DIGITAL
REVOLUTION



3
**ZHANG
KE**
SETTING NEW
STANDARDS



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**DELPHINE
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REACHING
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EDGY ORGANICS



MA YAN SONG

(NO. 1)



MA YAN SONG, together with his Beijing-based firm MAD Architects, is responsible for some of China's most innovative and statement-making buildings. The Yale-educated architect designs edgy organic structures that put people first (he calls his philosophy *shanshui*), emphasizing the connection between man and nature and doing so with a futuristic twist.

"There's an emotional aspect of architecture and urban space that's lacking in modern architecture," says Ma. His sinuous, Harbin Opera House, for example, with its sweeping lines that look like they were sculpted by wind and water, so impressed media observers that a CNN report suggested Harbin should supplant the Sydney Opera House in the pantheon of great architectural works of art.

MAD has many major projects underway or nearing completion. The Huangshan Mountain Village (master planning plus architecture design project in a 450,000-square-meter area) in the Yellow Mountains has just been completed and Beijing's 600,000-square-meter mixed-use urban complex Chaoyang Park Plaza is expected for completion in Summer 2017. In addition, the mammoth Fake Hills

apartment complex in coastal city Beihai, designed like an undulating mountain range, looks set to become a model alternative to the faceless and standardized housing blocks that are a feature of new cities across China. "The connection between the interior and the exterior landscape is very important to me," says Ma.



Internationally, he recently completed a sculptural modernist kindergarten in Japan and broke ground on a French residential project in the Parisian suburb of Clichy-Batignolles. In this project, floating forms, asymmetrical levels, and stepped terraces work to bring nature inside. But Ma's global game changer is his winning design for *Star Wars* creator George Lucas' Museum of Narrative Art (LMNA). In January, the museum finally agreed on a Los Angeles location with an opening scheduled for 2021.

P G . 2 5

Ma's projects – past, present and future – are gathered in his book *MAD Works MAD Architects* (Phaidon). "People often ask what MAD stands for," he says in the book. "Sometimes, I explain it stands for MA Design, but I like MAD (adjective) Architects better. It sounds like a group of architects with an attitude towards design and practice. I think it is important to practice architecture with an attitude, to be critical and sensitive to the issues and challenges in our world."

www.i-mad.com



Top: Chaoyang Park Plaza
Left: Harbin Opera House
(© Hufton + Crow)



PG. 26

Is it possible to design and manufacture a covetable collection of contemporary furniture in China and sell it to design-savvy consumers at a great price? Absolutely. Just look at entrepreneur **SHU WEI**'s label ZaoZuo, which began life as a digital brand in 2015 before opening stores in Shanghai and Beijing last year.



ZaoZuo – the name translates as design and production – is aimed at the growing middle classes, who are after affordable stylish, affordable designs. Shu, a Stanford MBA-holding professional with experience in graphic design, app development and social media corporate work, grew frustrated at domestic choices of cheap Chinese-made items or expensive imported collections. She saw a gap in the market and knew a digital platform with countrywide reach was the best strategy for success.



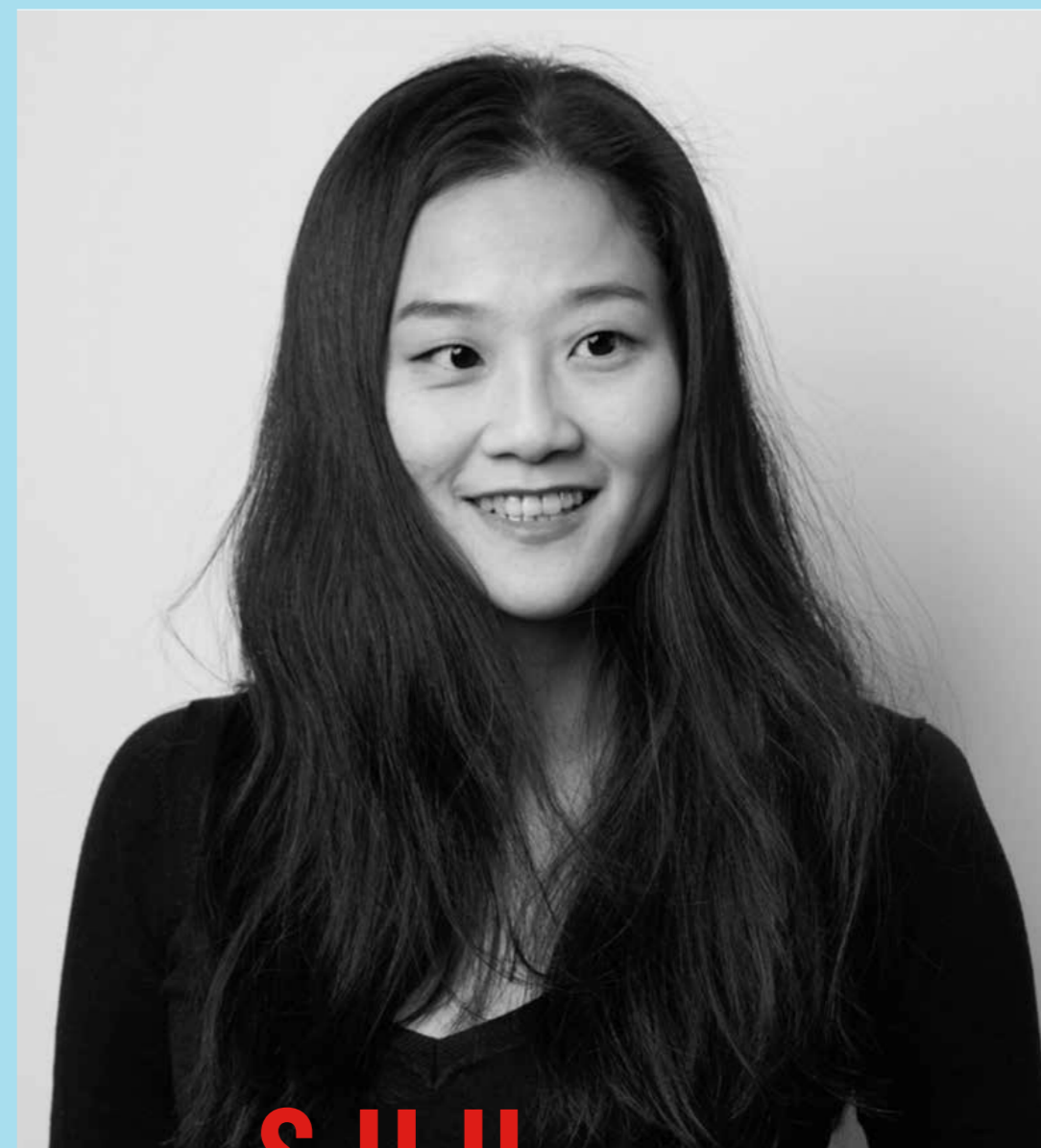
DIGITAL REVOLUTION

Shu teamed up with industrial designer Luca Nichetto, ZaoZuo's Creative Director, and together they signed up international designers like Richard Hutten, Max Gerthel, Jonas Wagell, Noé Duchaufour-Lawrance, and Sebastian Herkner to work on the ZaoZuo collection. The result is a streamlined, contemporary collection that covers the color spectrum, from turquoise and coral to yellow, pink, and red.

Shu believes that the time is right for China to produce original brands rather than copies. Her team works with over 30 factories across China, drawing on their specialist production skills. Nichetto guides the design direction using a European task force for research and development (skills which are still lacking in the China marketplace), and to bring in fresh ideas to educate and develop the team. Plans are in place for more ZaoZuo stores domestically, followed by overseas expansion into Europe and the US. With great designs and affordable prices like RMB3,599 for a curvy Pebble Sofa, RMB798 for Sebastian Herkner side tables and RMB699 for a Luca Nichetto chair, what's not to love?

www.zaozuo.com

Top: Bloom Side Tables
Bottom: ZaoZuo - Beijing Store



SHU WEI

(NO. 2)

SETTING NEW STANDARDS



ZHANG
KE

(NO. 3)



Beijing-based architect **ZHANG KE** is breathing new life into the city's historic hutong neighborhoods. The global design community has recently turned the spotlight on his work, most recently with the prestigious 2016 Aga Khan Award for Architecture for Zhang's Micro Yuan'er Children's Library and Art Centre in Beijing.

One of three partners at ZAO/standardarchitecture – together with Zhang Hong and Claudia Taborda – Zhang advocates sustainable renewal strategies for Beijing's urban fabric. He creates community resources out of traditional courtyard properties, showcasing the power of imagination over demolition. One of the most critical and realistic thinkers among the young generation of Chinese designers and architects, Zhang gained his Master of Architecture and Urban Design graduate at Beijing's Tsinghua University (1996) and his Master of Architecture at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University (1998).



For the Micro Yuan'er project, Zhang and his team renovated a 400-year-old courtyard house which once held 12 families. Redesigning, reusing, and renovating the property, the team turned the property into something the neighborhood could enjoy. He inserted a plywood and concrete children's library that slots under an existing roof canopy, added a small art space, a drawing studio, and a dance studio. "The Micro Yuan'er is a strong statement about how we should treat our urban history of the past 60 years," he says.

Other hutong projects include a flexible 'urban living room' for a 30-square-meter Micro Hutong in Dashilar District, created by overlapping plywood boxes. For last year's Beijing Design Week's Baitasi Remade Program, he renovated a 150-square-meter O-Living Courtyard into a co-living space for work and play. Aside from the living area, the project included an exhibition space, kitchen, bathroom, laundry, and storage room.

Instead of demolishing, or retaining hutongs for unsustainable picturesque historical reasons, Zhang prefers to create a new kind of hutong life, one that is functional, sustainable and meets the needs of the local community. In this way, he believes, the hutongs will not only survive, but will thrive.

www.standardarchitecture.cn

PG. 27

Left: *Courtyard House*
Image Credit: *Wang Ziling*

NATURE CALLS



DELPHINE YIP - (NO. 4) HORSFIELD



It's not often that an architect gets the chance to design a castle high on a mountaintop in rural China. But **DELPHINE YIP-HORSFIELD** of the naked Group has done just that.

Her commanding castle, complete with turrets, drawbridge, banquet room, and even a dungeon, stands on the remains of an ancient castle villa on Moganshan mountain, built by Scottish missionary Duncan Main in 1910. With its stunning, 360-degree views of rolling hills far below, the structure forms the centerpiece of a new resort called naked Castle that opened to the public this year.

P G . 2 8

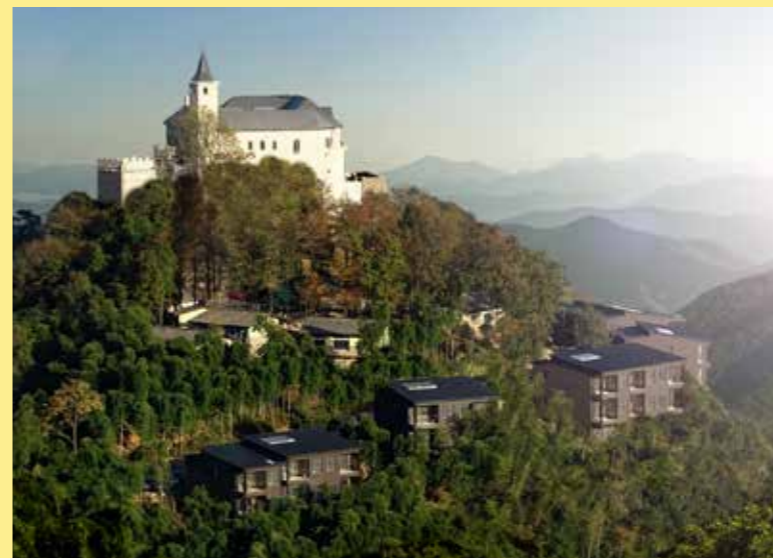
The castle is the latest step in a sustainable design and lifestyle journey that began on Moganshan 10 years ago when her now-husband Grant Horsfield discovered a cluster of village houses on its lower slopes. In a bid to reconnect with nature and enjoy the simple pleasures of life, the couple renovated the houses, turning them into a rural-lodging style resort called naked Home (2007).

Yip-Horsfield worked in Hong Kong, New York, and Boston before coming to Shanghai in 2000 for the Xintiandi development. She rose to become Partner at Ben Wood Studio Shanghai but, as the naked Group founded by her husband grew, took on the role as the group's Chairman & Chief Design Officer in 2013. Today, naked's portfolio includes the multi-award winning naked Stables resort (also in Moganshan), naked Hubs (multiple creative co-working spaces in urban areas) and naked Discovery, a learning centre in Shanghai.



An advocate for sustainable design, Yip-Horsfield led her team to a LEED Platinum certification for the naked Stables resort (2011). She favors local materials, traditional crafts, eco-technologies, and state-of-the-art construction techniques, using eco-tourism to create jobs and build pride in the local community. Half-jokingly nicknamed the 'King and Queen of Moganshan' for their passion, commitment and resilience, the Horsfields have big plans for naked domination, both in China and beyond. For now, naked Water (Taihu, Suzhou), naked Spring (Shaoxing) and naked Creek (Chengdu) resorts are in progress and naked Hubs are proliferating across China and Hong Kong.

www.nakedretreats.cn



Left: *naked Castle*
Top: *naked Bite at naked Castle*
Image Credit: *Graeme Kennedy, naked Group*

A SENSE OF INDUSTRY



JAMY YANG

(NO. 5)



JAMY YANG is the kind of innovator that inspires those around him. The driving force behind Yang Design combines Chinese humanistic thinking with a hefty dose of German logic, using his passion for industrial design to strategically build for the future.

Yang left China for Germany to study for a Master's Degree in Industrial Design, and later worked for Siemens at its Munich HQ. The Germanic influence resonated with him, and when he returned home to China he launched Yang Design in 2005, an innovative design consultancy which fuses craftsmanship and innovation. His star power has risen ever since.



Known for his ability to fuse creativity with research-based trend forecasting, Yang builds brand DNAs, using design to add business value. His work has earned him over 100 prestigious design awards – including Red Dot, iF, G-Mark, and IDEA.

He collaborates with brands like Boeing, BMW, Audi, Bosch, Poltrona Frau, Gaggenau, Philips, Huawei, DuPont, Swatch, and Herman Miller, designing everything from glasses and suitcases to airplane cabins, furniture, and spatial concepts. Recently for Audi he designed a carbon fiber smart suitcase, a material more often used for aviation and race cars due to its lightweight yet rigid properties.

PG. 29

Yang is passionate about collecting classic design items, many going back to the time of the British Industrial Revolution. To house the



hundreds of items he's collected, he built Yang Design Museum, China's first private industrial design museum in a former power station in Shanghai's industrial Baoshan district. It is here

that he comes home to roost – his office is in the same building – when he is not traveling the world seeking inspiration, curating shows, or addressing crowds on the exhibition speaker circuit.

Committed to social innovation through design, Yang also works with non-profits, such as the Pure Water Project in which he created a functional water bottle for children from rural areas. "I believe good design – even through a simple water bottle – can guide good habits and help create a more beautiful life," he says.

www.jammyang.com

Left: *Hennessy Chinese Tableware*
Top: *View On Bench furniture Collection*



Fashionable and progressive: Shanghai's annual ART021 fair is making its mark as the go-to art fair in the region. This is thanks in no small measure to seasoned publicist and ART021 co-founder **BAO YI FENG**, a man with his finger firmly on the pulse of emerging contemporary art collectors in China.

PG. 30

Chic and well connected, Shanghai-based Bao knows well how to bring galleries and buyers together, targeting collectors under 40 who have money and good taste. A leading player in the luxury brand, lifestyle, entertainment and art arenas, Bao founded PR firm Element Liquid in 2002. In 2013 it became part of the Activation Group with Bao as General Manager of Activation Liquid. That same year, Bao co-founded ART021 alongside former gallery director Kelly Ying.



THE RISE OF THE NEW COLLECTORS

ART021 (the name is based on Shanghai's calling code) held its 4th annual show in November 2016 at the Shanghai Exhibition Centre, hosting 84 leading galleries and creating quite a buzz among the city's trendy art-loving set. Visitors included celebrities, socialites, and fashionistas, alongside artists, collectors, budding collectors and media. Even Oscar-winning actor-artist Adrien Brody showed up to exhibit.

Asian and international galleries included heavy hitters like Gagosian, Hauser & Wirth, Pearl Lam Galleries, Galerie Perrotin, ShanghART, and Galleria Continua. The fair caught the attention of a vibrant young audience, many willing to buy on the spot. Such art purchases reveal a generational shift away from a more cautious older generation of art collectors who traditionally prefer auction house buys.

November 2017 is ART021's 5th anniversary. Bao and his team want to become an annual highlight in the Shanghai art scene, appealing to new collectors, integrating local resources with global perspectives and bringing art galleries, collectors and art practitioners together. So far, they are on the right track.

www.art021.org

Left: *ART021 Fair*
Top: *Shanghai Exhibition Centre*



BAO YI FENG

(NO. 6)

MODERN GEOMETRY



CHEN FU RONG

(NO. 7)



Product designer **CHEN FU RONG** co-founded Xiamen-based design firm WUU in 2014, bringing timeless and functional furniture, lighting and accessories to an eager audience. He is part of a rising set of young designers who not only know how to produce innovative designs but, just as importantly, are comfortable spreading the word about their work both at home and overseas.

After winning the *AD China x Design Shanghai Emerging Chinese Designer Award* in 2015, Chen also showed at London's 100% Design Week and Japan's IFFT. In 2016, he returned to Design Shanghai as an exhibitor with *Ellipsoid*, a series of ultramarine blue concrete tabletop containers and accessories with brass lids and bases. At the London Design Festival, he debuted *Symmetry*, a geometrical tool set with precise lines inspired by an Artisan Revival project using classic shapes from Fuzhou. He also showed at the wallpaper* Handmade event in Milan.

In a competitive marketplace, Chen stands out from the crowd with well-researched collections that blend craft techniques with a modernist vision. His *Euclid* stationery collection includes angular paperweights and a cardholder crafted from whole pieces of brass and hand polished. His *Hexa* honeycomb-like flexible desktop organizers were rendered in a special edition last year made of bright blue concrete, a material Chen loves to work with and explore.

New for 2017 is the streamlined *Touchable Light* lamp collection designed with precise, interlocking components both outside and inside. The idea, says Chen, is to explore how users and lights interact. The lightweight *T-Series Reading Lamp* has adjustable brightness and color temperature while the *T-Series Wall Lamp*, inspired by traditional Chinese pull-switch corridor lights, offers extendable cable lengths. The super minimal *T-Series Floor Lamp* has a polished marble base and exposed switch and cable. For Chen, and WUU, the future looks bright.

www.wuu.im



Top: *T-Series Floor Lamp*

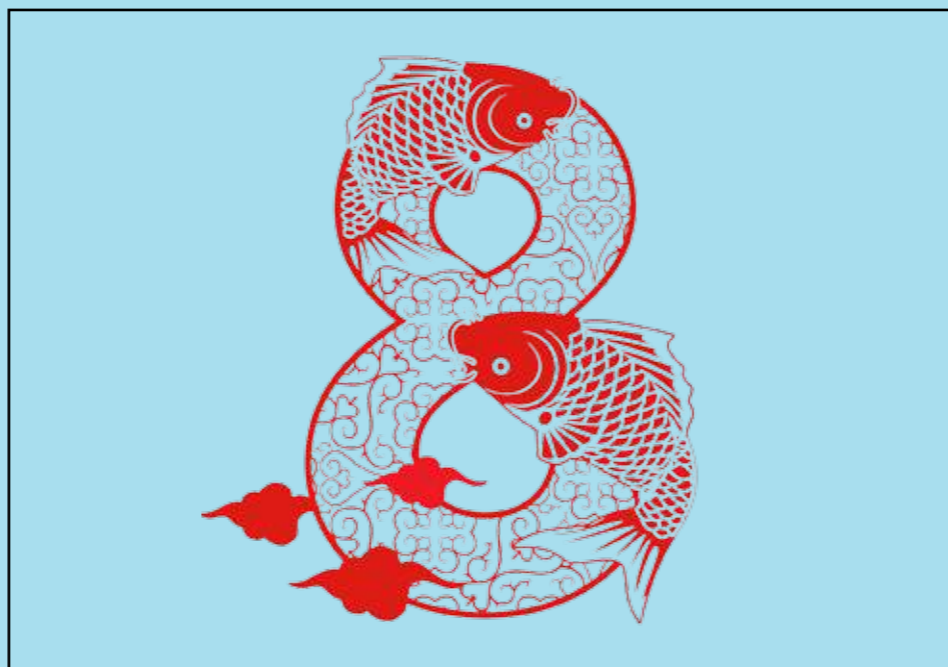
P G . 3 1

MOVIE STARS



**A J A X L A W
& V I R G I N I A
L U N G**

(N O . 8)



Space must be tight these days in the offices of One Plus Partnership. After all, where do you find room to display over 402 international design awards? Co-Founders and Directors **A J A X L A W** and **V I R G I N I A L U N G** have amassed an impressive roll call of wins (including Red Dot, iF, Gold Key, Good Design, APIDC, and more), with 57 awards earned in 2016 alone, from the US, UK, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Taiwan, as well as their native Hong Kong.

P G . 3 2

With a portfolio spanning multi-disciplinary design projects, these days the husband and wife team are well-known for their cutting edge cinematic design schemes dotted across China. From Wuhan to Wuxi, Nanjing to Guangzhou, Law and Lung are making sure that cinema-goers enjoy the off-screen theater environment as much as the movies themselves.



Law and Lung acknowledge that in the competitive cinema business, design is a powerful tool to enhance a cinema's image. They always begin by defining a theme for the project. "It's where the soul of the design is," says Lung. At the Guangzhou Jinyi Meteor Cinema, copper and bronzed-toned 3-D aluminium rectangular-cuboid 'meteor showers' rain down upon cinema-goers from the ceiling and the auditorium walls. Each computer adjusted piece is angled for maximum visual effect.



In Nanjing's Insun International Cinema, the importance of sound in the movies business led to soundwave-like installations made of red metal tubing being draped from the ceiling. In Wuhan's Xintang Wanke Mall International Cinema, inspiration came from scriptwriting, with oversized white Chinese characters broken down into dynamic radicals made of 3D metal tubing and placed in creative combinations around the cinema perimeter.

Remaining the only Asian interior design firm to win the prestigious Andrew Martin International Interior Designer of the Year Award (2012), One Plus Partnership is a tough act to follow. We wait to see how many more boundary-pushing cinematic schemes will be realized in 2017 – and hope there is one near us to enjoy.

www.onepluspartnership.com

Left: *Insun International Cinema* (<http://www.gooood.hk>)
Top: *Jinyi Meteor Cinema* (© One Plus Partnership Limited & Jonathan Leijonhufvud)

VOICE OF THE NEW GENERATION



ADRIAN CHENG

(NO. 9)



Art connoisseur, entrepreneur, and retail estate/retail magnate **ADRIAN CHENG** is committed to creating an artisanal lifestyle with a focus on imagination, creativity, and bespoke craftsmanship. When not acting as Executive Vice Chairman of the expansive New World Development Group founded by his late grandfather Cheng Yu-tung, the Harvard-educated trailblazer is busy expanding his K11 art mall brand and telling the world about talented young Mainland artists.

Cheng, who is in his late 30s, is closely aligned with the group of millennial artists he supports. He founded the K11 Art Mall gallery-museum concept in Hong Kong (2009) and expanded it to Shanghai (2013). The concept is expanding, with three more K11 projects – Guangzhou, Shenyang and Wuhan – set to open this year. At K11, visitors enjoy art-related events, from rotating shows by Monet and Picasso to the permanent K11 Kollection featuring over 50 art pieces, including works by Damien Hirst, Olafur Eliasson, and Yinka Shonibare.



In 2010, Cheng launched the K11 Art Foundation (KAF), a not-for-profit organization that supports young artists and builds bridges with the wider art world.

KAF also develops local curatorial talent and educates the general public about art. “Everyone has art inside them,” he says. “Art; after all, is a tool to showcase your lifestyle. Creativity should be for everyone.”

PG. 33

Cheng has a global vision. Over the years he has forged links with major international galleries including the Serpentine Galleries in London, the Palais de Tokyo, and the Centre Pompidou in Paris, encouraging overseas curators to connect with and explore work by Chinese artists. Recently, Inner Mongolian-born video artist Cheng Ran made his New York debut in a residency at the New Museum, sponsored by the K11 Art Foundation, the first opportunity that the museum has given to a Chinese artist since the 1990s.

Other projects for 2017 include the launch of an artisanal furniture collection called *Khora*, which debuted in Milan this April. Cheng co-designed the collection in collaboration with Japanese master designer Shigeru Uchida, focusing not only on design aesthetics, but also exploring the notion of space and the man-nature relationship. A cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary project – just the way he likes it.

www.k11artfoundation.org

Left: *Hack Space*
Top: *WE*

Artist **DING HAO**'s intricate towering sculptures were recently exhibited in the *Sky Mansions* show at The Opposite House Beijing. Inside the stylish environs of the fabulously art hotel, his tiny, perfectly-formed buildings rose skywards, reaching ever higher.

The Shandong Province-born artist (b.1987) graduated with a Master's Degree from Beijing Central Academy of Fine Arts in 2015 and currently lectures at the Wuhan Institute of Technology. Collected by a number of organizations and private individuals, and visiting artist in Sao Paulo during the 2016 Olympic Games, Ding is becoming increasingly well-known on the Chinese art circuit.



One look at his innovative sculptures and it's easy to understand why. His geometrically precise, iron and wood artworks fuse technology and creativity, combining elements from Chinese classical architecture with modern spatial construction techniques. Meticulously detailed, architectural-esque works include the *Crescent Moon* with its sinuous oriental cottages, the tightly compressed houses of *Whereabouts*, and the show-stopping exhibition centrepiece, the 45-meter high *Babel Tower*.

Left: *Sky Mansions*
Top: *Sky Mansions*



REACHING
FOR
THE SKY

For Ding, an idealist at heart, such multi-layering is a way to fuse illusion and reality, to reflect upon life and human nature. "I believe there are many people like me who, despite being over thirty, are still moved and fascinated by fantasy stories loved by children, like Japanese writer and director Hayao Miyazaki's *Castle in the Sky* and *Howl's Moving Castle*." He is a firm admirer of fearless creative spirits and impractical idealism, especially as a reaction to the stresses of modern society. "I create mansions of ideals, a moment that is standing on the ground but walking towards the sky. Only then can I comfort these fickle times as they hurry by."



The *Sky Mansions* exhibition was promoted by Surge Art, the Beijing-based online art platform that showcases young artists. If Ding Hao's work intrigues you, here's our advice – collect him now.

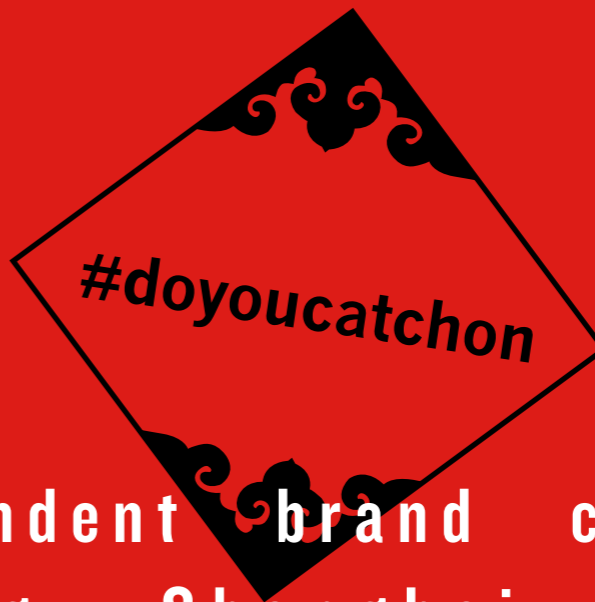


DING
HAO

(NO. 10)



oic



Founded in 2001, CatchOn is an independent brand communications consultancy with offices in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing. Specializing in hospitality, travel, and design, CatchOn has been making its mark in China for a decade. During that time, we've dished up creative strategies for the world's best chefs and restaurateurs, opened the door for new hotel groups to enter the local market and housed global architecture firms and interior designers in our portfolio. To celebrate CatchOn's tenth anniversary in China, we've consulted the innovators and trailblazers, the movers and mavericks to identify the people and trends who are shaping the future of China.

Contact us at insights@catchonco.com



catchon

