

“NERI&HU HOLDS SOLO EXHIBITION ‘REFLECTIVE NOSTALGIA’ IN BERLIN”

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Neri&Hu holds solo exhibition ‘Reflective Nostalgia’ in Berlin

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Neri&Hu’s solo exhibition Reflective Nostalgia opened at Aedes Architecture Forum in Berlin on October 14th, 2022. Based on the concept of “reflective nostalgia”, the exhibition showcases Neri&Hu’s works that embrace the contradictions of modernity and explore multifaceted plot lines, imaginary pasts and prospective futures. Neri&Hu: Reflective Nostalgia will last until November 30th, 2022.

In recent decades, living and traveling extensively throughout Asia, Neri&Hu observes the alarming trend of Asia’s major metropolises becoming more and more alike. From Shenzhen or Seoul to Kuala Lumpur or Bangkok, the army of glassy high rise towers marching through each of their CBDs nearly obliterates any perceivable differences between these cities. In China this phenomenon is exacerbated by the sheer scale at which its process of urbanization and modernization has occurred. Practicing in China, at this critical moment, Neri&Hu finds themselves caught between “the optimization of advanced technology and the ever-present tendency to regress into nostalgic historicism.”



Nostalgia can be a problematic notion for some; it tends to be taken dismissively, as Charles Maier remarks: “Nostalgia is to longing as kitsch is to art.” But Neri&Hu feels strongly that there is a potential to be constructive with nostalgia, rather than merely reductive. As the firm formulates a strategy for how to operate within a historic context or lineage, Neri&Hu finds productivity in the concept of Reflective Nostalgia, a term coined by scholar Svetlana Boym. According to Boym, *restorative* nostalgia is more literal; it attempts a “trans historical reconstruction of a lost home,” and considers itself “as truth and tradition.” In contrast, *reflective* nostalgia thrives on *algia* (the longing itself) and delays the homecoming – wistfully, ironically, desperately. Reflective nostalgia does not follow a single plot but explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones. It loves details, not symbols.” In short, reflective nostalgia offers a critical distance that is less regressive than the former restorative nostalgia.

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As a genre, the exhibited projects share similar strategies – using material contrast, tectonic differentiation, formal assemblage and surgical grafting. However, each project comes with its own set of unique issues related to how one engages a tumultuous concession-era heritage, resistance to the commercialization of faux historical relics, and the role of representation in the dialectics between past and present. One can sense the delicate balance between the contrasts of new and old, smooth and textured, refined and raw. These projects also speak to an archeological approach of peeling back the layers, working with deletions as much as additions. On all scales of design, Neri&Hu embraces nostalgia as a productive lens, through which the team can consider an alternative reading of historical contexts as well as a different process of design within that context. It is a methodology that urges Neri&Hu to look closely at the details of the mundane, in hopes of achieving a deeper understanding of the heritage of those places that we want to not only participate in presently, but to extend to the future. Image: Erik-Jan Ouwerkerk / Courtesy: Neri&Hu Design and Research Office



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Neri&Hu: Reflective Nostalgia

- Duration: October 15 – November 30, 2022
- Location: Aedes Architecture Forum
- Project Team: Lyndon Neri, Rossana Hu, Christine Chang, Federico Saralvo, Jan Lee, Yinzhu Shen, Luna Hong, Lyuqitiao Wang, Serein Liu, Amy Cao
- Aedes Architecture Forum: Julia Schlüsmeier-Hage, Hanna Düspohl
- Generously supported by: Aranya, Youwell, De La Espada, La Manufacture
- Aedes cooperation partners: Zumtobel, Cemex, Camerich, Erwin Hymer Group

