

“NERI&HU’S DESIGN FOR A FACTORY IN CHINA IS A  
‘MONUMENT’ TO ITS INEVITABLE FUTURE”

stir world; SEP 2023

<https://www.stirworld.com/see-features-neri-hus-design-for-a-factory-in-china-is-a-monument-to-its-inevitable-future>

**stir**world  
see. think. inspire. reflect

We are living in nostalgic times. This is reflected not only in the cultural zeitgeist—obsessed with reliving the good old days—but also in the architectural landscape increasingly enamoured with reveling in the aesthetic of bygone eras. Recently, there has been a proliferation in the discourse of **adaptive reuse** and **refurbishment** in architectural practice. In fact, architecture has always been fascinated with the idea of ruin, a subject that goes back to the images of Piranesi. Signifying the transience of material entities, the ruin also embodies the constant struggle between man and nature. Interestingly, it is also a subject that fascinates **Lyndon Neri** and **Rossana Hu**, lead architects of the Shanghai-based multidisciplinary studio, who consider historic buildings as urban artefacts. Hu has previously talked about her inspirations and how she established the practice along with partner Lyndon Neri in a STIR-exclusive **interview** for the series, **UNSCRIPTED**.

With the dichotomy of man and nature in mind, **Neri&Hu’s** design for a factory in Jiaxing, along the Grand Canal is conceived to respond to its natural, historical and cultural backdrop. Previously, the globally acclaimed practice has worked on projects that explore the idea of nostalgia and architecture—for instance in their design for The Brick Wall, a hotel that took inspiration from traditional **Chinese architecture**; **Nantou City Guesthouse** which involved urban incisions in an old residential building in Shenzhen, to even their own office that reconfigured an existing, nondescript structure in the Jing’an Temple area in **Shanghai**. This ongoing dialogue with temporality in their work inspires the form of an unassuming, porous block that rises at its northern end in a series of undulating terraces for the factory complex of Camerich—an international modern furniture brand for which Neri&Hu has previously designed a **bamboo pavilion** called **The Structural Field** in an **exhibition space** in **China**.



“NERI&HU’S DESIGN FOR A FACTORY IN CHINA IS A  
‘MONUMENT’ TO ITS INEVITABLE FUTURE”

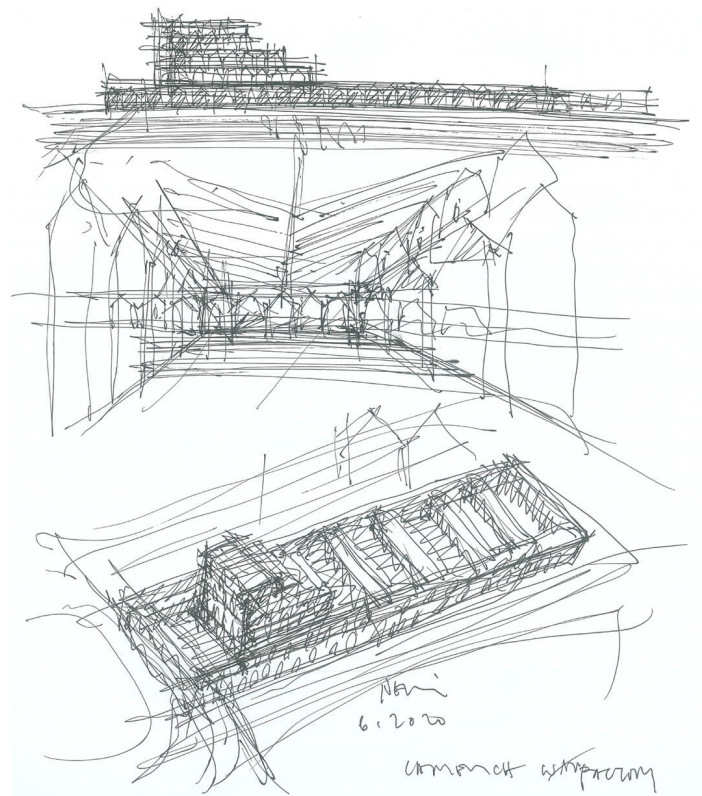
stir world; SEP 2023

<https://www.stirworld.com/see-features-neri-hus-design-for-a-factory-in-china-is-a-monument-to-its-inevitable-future>

**stir**world  
see. think. inspire. reflect

The building, titled *The Pastoral Monument*, seeks to bridge the gap between industry and culture through a **contextual design**. The historical context is more than apparent at the site, with the Grand Canal flowing alongside it. The 2500-year-old canal that was once instrumental for trade and transportation, continues to be used today. Its presence underscores the idea of **innovation** and structural ingenuity demanded by contemporary factory design. Moreover, this historical continuity allowed the architects to dwell on the nature of factories in a post-industrial landscape, how their manufacturing capacity is affected in a globally connected world and the impact of research and innovation on society at large.

Drawing from the tenets of the modern **land art** movement, the building is envisaged to stand tall in an open landscape, signifying a sense of permanence in this fleeting world. This momentary permanence is also emphasised through the rhythmic repetition of the structural members in the **façade design**. Sheathed in red pigmented concrete—that calls to mind the time-worn hues of rusted metal and reflects the productive spaces within—the porous nature of the exterior skin further establishes a continuity with the surrounding landscape.



“NERI&HU’S DESIGN FOR A FACTORY IN CHINA IS A  
‘MONUMENT’ TO ITS INEVITABLE FUTURE”

*stir world*; SEP 2023

<https://www.stirworld.com/see-features-neri-hus-design-for-a-factory-in-china-is-a-monument-to-its-inevitable-future>

**stir**world  
see. think. inspire. reflect

In accordance with the typology, flexibility, and efficiency of production are the core design principles that inform the interior layout. Parallel rows of manufacturing areas are separated by double-height **galleries** with clerestories, which can accommodate large-scale equipment while letting ample **natural light** into the factory spaces. Elevated corridors connect the production rows with other support facilities and offices. This also facilitates better distribution across the expansive floor plates. A stepping tower further lets in daylight throughout the interior spaces. Spaces for research and development, **exhibition**, public amenities, and staff quarters are distributed on different levels of the complex, all of which enjoy access to internal atriums or exterior hanging **gardens**.



“NERI&HU’S DESIGN FOR A FACTORY IN CHINA IS A  
‘MONUMENT’ TO ITS INEVITABLE FUTURE”

*stir world*; SEP 2023

<https://www.stirworld.com/see-features-neri-hus-design-for-a-factory-in-china-is-a-monument-to-its-inevitable-future>



While the factory building has been designed to be a cutting-edge facility geared towards the future, it also contends with its own history, particular and universal at the same time. The architects explain this condition by saying, "Particular—as machines, logistics, and technical know-how will always grow by leaps and bounds, requiring architecture to be capable of adaptation; universal—as weathering, the passing of time and material decay will result in how the building is occupied as well as its relationship to nature." The architecture, in this way, will be constantly wresting dichotomies—of permanence and impermanence, of nature and architecture.

The design team is well aware of the fact that in the years to come, what was once standing will be subject to decay. For them, it is only the passage of time, when nature takes over, that the work will be truly completed. "[It] is not a relic frozen in time," as they mention in an official statement. On the contrary, it embraces its own transformation, which forms a bridge between the history that came before it and the future that will subsequently succeed it. This would-be 'monument' is nostalgic for its own future.