

“THE FIRST CHINESE DISTILLERY FROM PERNOD RICARD, DESIGNED BY NERI&HU”

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ELLE DECOR

## THE FIRST CHINESE DISTILLERY FROM PERNOD RICARD, DESIGNED BY NERI&HU

*On a UNESCO site in the Sichuan province, the creative duo sparks a dialogue with nature and vernacular architecture*

by CIRO MARCO MUSELLA 26/11/2021



“Deeply anchored to our history, we’re like roots.” It’s with these words that **Lyndon Neri and Rossana Hu** of **Neri&Hu** opened a conversation featured in the May 2020 issue of *Elle Decor Italia*. Together, the creative duo has consistently showcased their ability to stand out on the international panorama with an architecture uniting the theory of construction and respect for local traditions, all while responding to even the most contemporary needs — including those of their illustrious international clients. This was exactly the case for a **distillery situated at the foot of Mount Emei**, conceived as the **first headquarters for Pernod Ricard whisky in China**.



The new distillery designed by Neri&Hu for a French colossal searches for harmony between an Industrial appearance and the visitor experience  
Chris Pao

For its first Chinese distillery, the French multinational specialized in spirits with brands like Mumm champagne, Absolut vodka, and Ramazzotti amaro, launched a competition for an exceptional architecture to be constructed on a truly unique site. To clinch the commission were the **architects of Neri&Hu** — currently busy at work in Rome’s MAXXI for an original dialogue with the oeuvre of Carlo Scarpa — who designed a **home for whisky at the foot of Mount Emei**, one of the most spiritual locations of China declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1966. Where an imposing monastery once stood — which according to legend has served as a backdrop for historic battles and pilgrimages — the void left by history has become a source of inspiration for an architecture entrusted to elementary forms and pure geometries.

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The site hosting the distillery sits at the foot of Mount Emel, one of the most important places in the national culture

Chen Hao

The complex of the **distillery** is composed of multiple buildings, with industrial spaces embracing a **modern interpretation of China's vernacular architecture**, accompanied by two other volumes destined to welcome visitors through various experiences within the world of spirits. To host the whisky production plants are three long buildings situated along the north end of the lot, softly accompanying the natural slope. Respecting the vernacular architecture, the external appearance of the buildings recalls that of tradition thanks to sloping rooftops made with reclaimed clay shingles resting on a contemporary structure in reinforced concrete. With a vision to recover and through the lens of a cycle of destruction and reconstruction, the creatives organized supporting walls to be realized with materials extracted from the terrain while leveling the lot.



The complex is composed of three buildings with an industrial character and two others – one circular, one square

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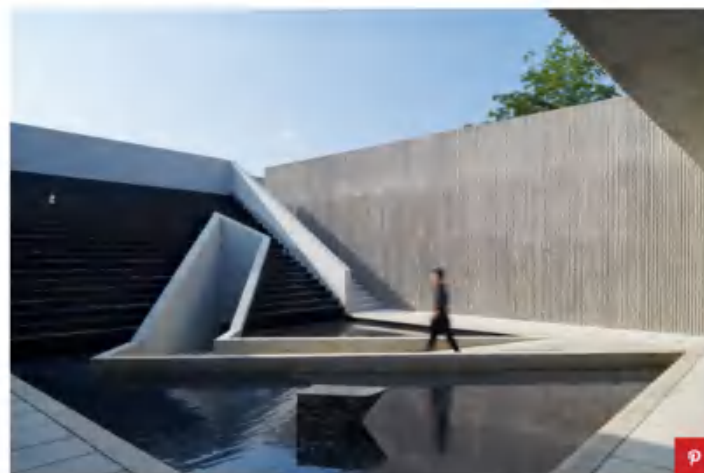
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The two central buildings of the distillery are given a circular and square form, shaped into two precise geometries that, respectively, signify sky and earth in Chinese philosophy. For the former, Neri&Hu have paid homage to Rome's Pantheon, an architecture they also celebrated in the [Aranya Art Center](#). Partially underground, the five halls for tastings face a courtyard where water creates a central staircase passing through the oculus of the dome, which becomes an overarching reference element within the distillery, emerging from the terrain and recreating the silhouette of Mount Emei.



The circular building intended for tastings is a clear tribute to Rome's Pantheon  
Chen Hao

The restaurant and bar of this home for whisky are hosted within the square building, which projects outwards on two sides — one of which is suspended over the banks of a stream that characterizes the site. Divided into two environments, the building presents a collective hall arranged along the perimeter to overlook the open courtyard, which frames the peak of Mount Emei with a scenic staircase. The project is curated down to every last detail, which began from the very outset of construction. The same techniques used on the worksite, in fact, reference the oldest tradition of construction, in a building where the search for harmony between architecture and the natural landscape come center stage, between industry and the visitor experience.



The internal courtyard of the square building hosting the restaurant  
Chen Hao