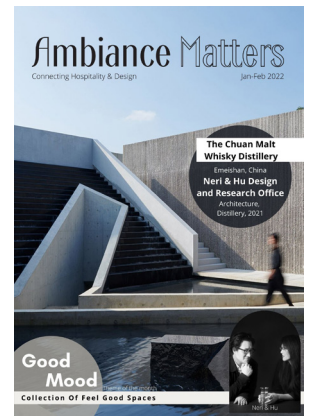


“THE CHUAN MALT WHISKY DISTILLERY | SHAN-SHUI: AN EXEMPLIFICATION OF DUALITY OF ELEMENTS \_ NERI&HU”

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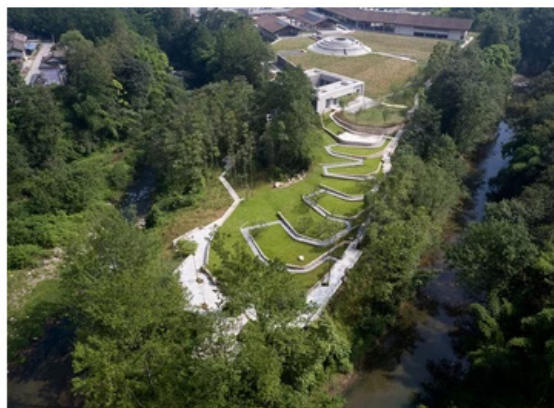


Ambiance Matters · Jan 26 · 5 min read



## The Chuan Malt Whisky Distillery | Shan-shui: An Exemplification Of Duality Of Elements \_ Neri&Hu

Emelshan, China \_ The Chuan Malt Whisky Distillery | Shan-shui: An Exemplification Of Duality Of Elements \_ Neri&Hu



For over a thousand years Mount Emei has persisted as one of the most deeply spiritual places in China and was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996.

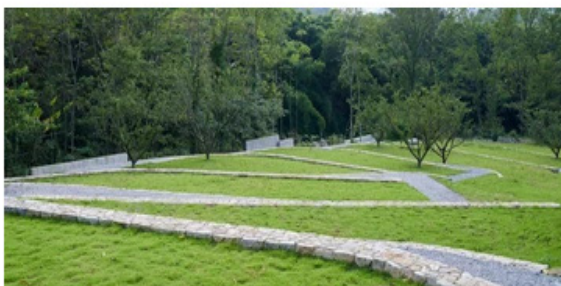
The revered ground upon which our site sits has a rich history itself – through the centuries, this land was once an impressive monastery, the site of several historic battles, and a stopping point along many pilgrimage and trade routes.

While any built remnants of the past no longer remain on-site, its very emptiness is powerfully suggestive of all of its fabled memories.

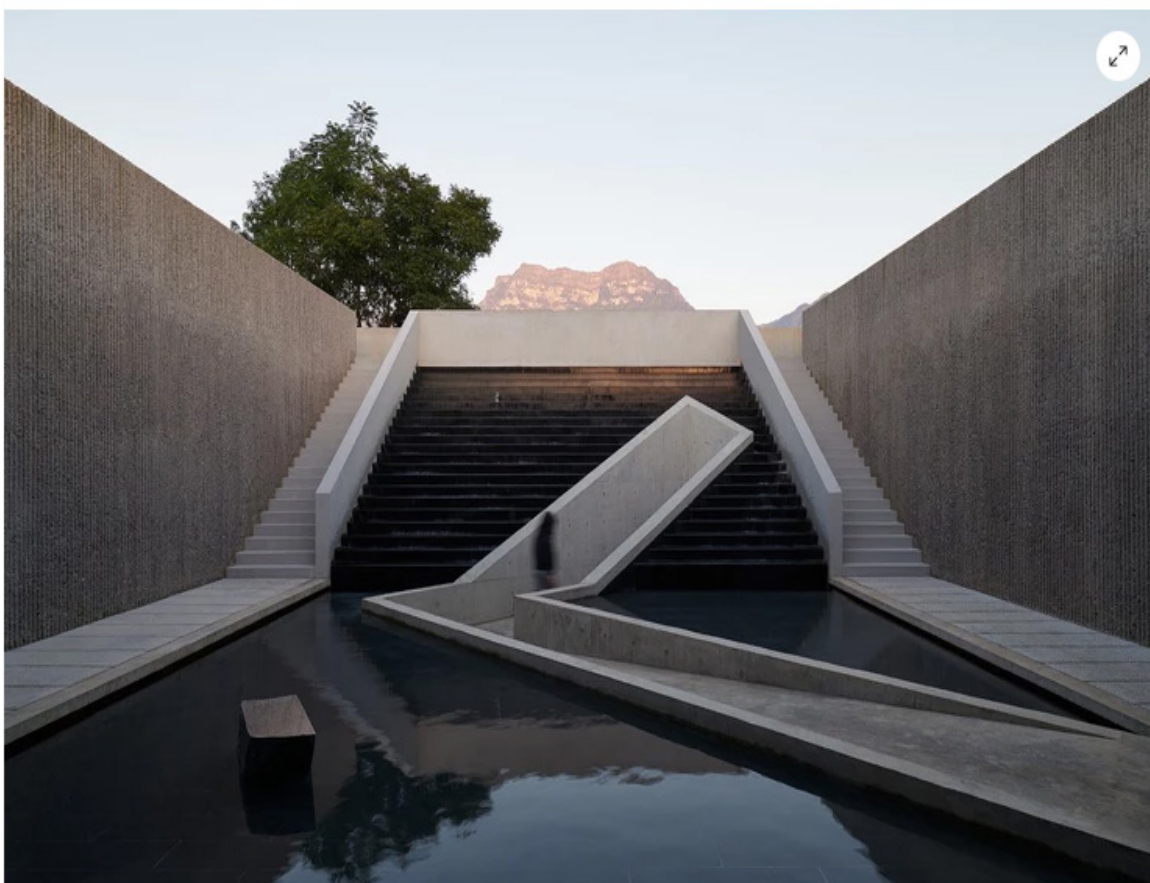
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Three years ago, Neri&Hu won the design competition and took up the challenge of designing a distillery and home for Pernod Ricard's first whisky in China, an opportunity to create a timeless architecture that speaks to the core values of a visionary new brand as well as the material and cultural heritage it aspires to sustain.





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Surrounded on three sides by a winding creek, and with the majestic Emei peak as a backdrop, the site for this project is an exemplification of the Chinese notion of the duality of natural elements which make up the world we live in.

Shan-shui literally means ‘mountain-water.’ While shan represents strength and permanence, shui represents fluidity and transformation; they are two opposing yet complementary forces.



In the spirit of this philosophy, the position of the proposal is to conceive a gesture whose very strength lies in its humbleness and simplicity, by its profound respect for nature.

This paradigm is also manifested in the shan shui painting, one of the three genres of traditional Chinese painting, in which the integration of two elements leads to another dimension of the picturesque.

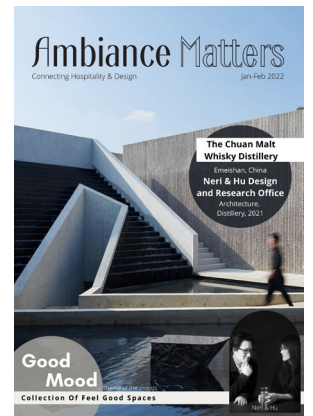


The architecture itself manifests this balanced duality in many ways, with the industrial buildings as a modern interpretation of vernacular Chinese architecture, and the visitor buildings as elemental geometries grounded in the terrain.

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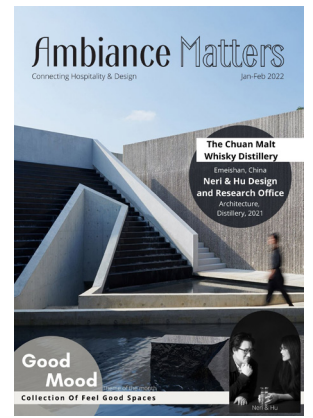
Three long buildings housing the whisky production facilities are situated at the north side of the site; parallel in formation, they are tucked into the natural gentle slope of the land with gradually descending rooflines. In an interpretation of vernacular architecture, reclaimed clay tiles give a humble texture to the pitched roofs that rest upon a modern concrete post-and-beam structure. The infill of rock walls is made from the very boulders extracted from the ground during site leveling, so that the cycle of destruction and recreation may continue in permanent evolution.



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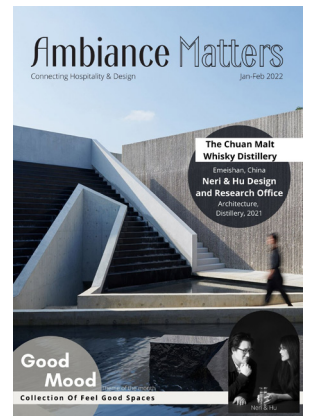
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In contrast to the vernacular roots of the industrial buildings, the two visitor experience buildings are built upon fundamental geometries: the circle and the square, which in Chinese philosophy represent heaven and earth, respectively.

The round tasting experience building is partially submerged in the ground, with five subterranean tasting rooms surrounding a domed courtyard that contains a cascading water feature in the middle.

The upper part of the dome reveals itself out of the ground slightly; with three concentric brick rings perched atop, it subtly mirrors the silhouette of Mount Emei.



This sculptural landform becomes an iconic presence that can be seen from every part of the site, and meanwhile, acts as a culminating destination from which visitors can enjoy a full panoramic vista. The square restaurant and bar building is located further down the topography, cantilevered on two sides with one corner hovering over the river bank. While the dining space is organized along the building's perimeter for open views, at the core an open-air courtyard is oriented to frame the Emei peak as a borrowed scene.

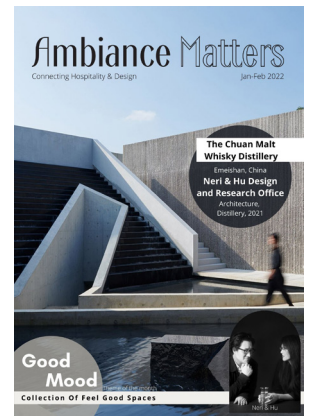




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Besides a deep appreciation for the site's natural resources, the project is also an embodiment of the refined sense of artistry embedded in whisky-making and blending, which is in dialogue with traditional Chinese craftsmanship and knowledge of materials.

A variety of concrete, cement, and stone mixtures form the base material palette, finding resonance in the strong mineral presence of the site. Accent materials are drawn from those used in whisky craft, such as the copper distillation pots to the aged oak casks.



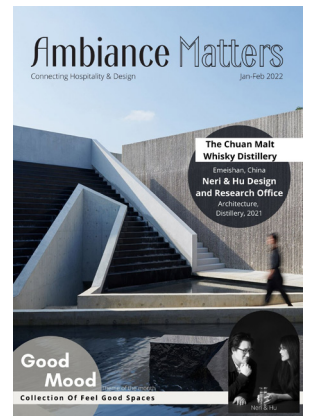
Throughout the project, Neri&Hu tries to embody the Chinese concept of the dichotomy of two elements that exist in opposition yet complement each other, and to strike a harmonious balance between architecture and landscape, between industry and visitor experience, between mountain and water.



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**Special Features:** Industrial production facility, Visitor center, River and mountain views, Masonry walls, Semi-underground tasting rooms, Open-air domed structure, Cantilevered restaurant building, Water features

**Architecture – Materials:** Exposed concrete structures, Wood-form concrete, Chiseled concrete, Cast-in-place stone + cement walls, Aggregate concrete, Concrete bricks, Glazing, Clay roof tiles, Copper, Black metal, Elmwood, Bamboo composite wood



**Landscape – Materials:** Rough stone (extracted from site excavation), Wood-form concrete, Aggregate concrete, Honed black granite

**Interiors – Materials:** Cement plaster, Aggregate concrete, Oak, Copper, Raw steel

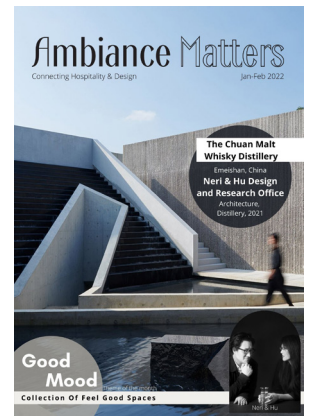




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**Architect:** Neri&Hu Design and Research Office

**Project:** The Chuan Malt Whisky Distillery

**Type:** Distillery

**Area:** 7,350 sq. mt.

**Year:** 2021

**Location:** Emeishan, Sichuan Province, China

**Interior design:** Neri&Hu Design and Research Office

**Partners-In-charge:** Lyndon Neri, Rossana Hu

**Associate director-In-charge:** Nellie Yang

**Associate:** Utsav Jain, Siyu Chen

**Design team:** Feng Wang, Guo Peng, Josh Murphy, Fergus Davis, Alexandra Heijink, Vivian Bao, Yota Takaira, Rosie Tseng, Nicolas Fardet, Yin Sheng, Lili Cheng, July Huang, Luna Hong, Haiou Xin

**FF&E design:** Design Republic

**Landscape design:** YIYU Design

**Experience design:** BRC Imagination Arts

**Construction (architecture & landscape):** Qi'an Group, Suzhou Hezhan

**Construction (Interior):** K&H International

**Decorative Lighting:** Custom design at Viabizzuno, Parachilna

**Furniture:** Custom design at De La Espada, Classicon, Stellar Works, Vitra, Carl Hansen

**Client:** Pernod Ricard

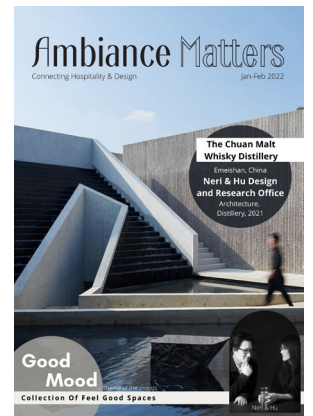
**Text:** By Architect

**Photo credits:** Hao Chen

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## About Neri&Hu:

Founded in 2004 by partners Lyndon Neri and Rossana Hu, Neri&Hu Design and Research Office is an inter-disciplinary architectural design practice based in Shanghai, China. Neri&Hu works internationally providing architecture, interior, master planning, graphic, and product design services. Currently working on projects in many countries, Neri&Hu is composed of multi-cultural staff who speak over 30 different languages. The diversity of the team reinforces a core vision for the practice: to respond to a global worldview incorporating overlapping design disciplines for a new paradigm in architecture.

Neri&Hu's location is purposeful. With Shanghai considered a new global frontier, Neri&Hu is in the center of this contemporary chaos. The city's cultural, urban, and historic contexts function as a point of departure for the architectural explorations involved in every project. Because new sets of contemporary problems relating to buildings now extend beyond traditional architecture, the practice challenges traditional boundaries of architecture to include other complementary disciplines.

Neri&Hu believes strongly in research as a design tool, as each project bears its unique set of contextual issues. A critical probing into the specificities of program, site, function, and history is essential to the creation of rigorous design work. Based on research, Neri&Hu desires to anchor its work on the dynamic interaction of experience, detail, material, form, and light rather than conforming to a formulaic style. The ultimate significance behind each project comes from how the built forms create meaning through their physical representations.

**Link:** <http://www.neriandhu.com/en>

