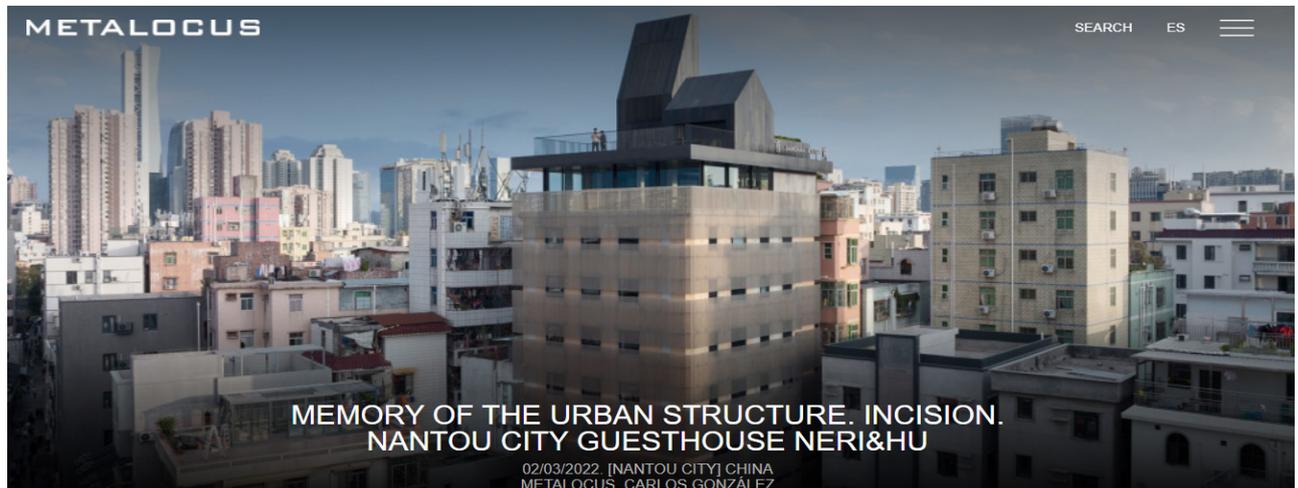


“MEMORY OF THE URBAN STRUCTURE. INCISION.  
NANTOU CITY GUESTHOUSE NERI&HU”

METALOCUS; MAR 2022

<https://www.metalocus.es/en/news/memory-urban-structure-incision-nantou-city-guesthouse-nerihu>

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Shanghai-based studio **Neri&Hu** has renovated a nine-storey housing building, in Nantou City, western Shenzhen, into a new guesthouse, wrapped in metal mesh bands.

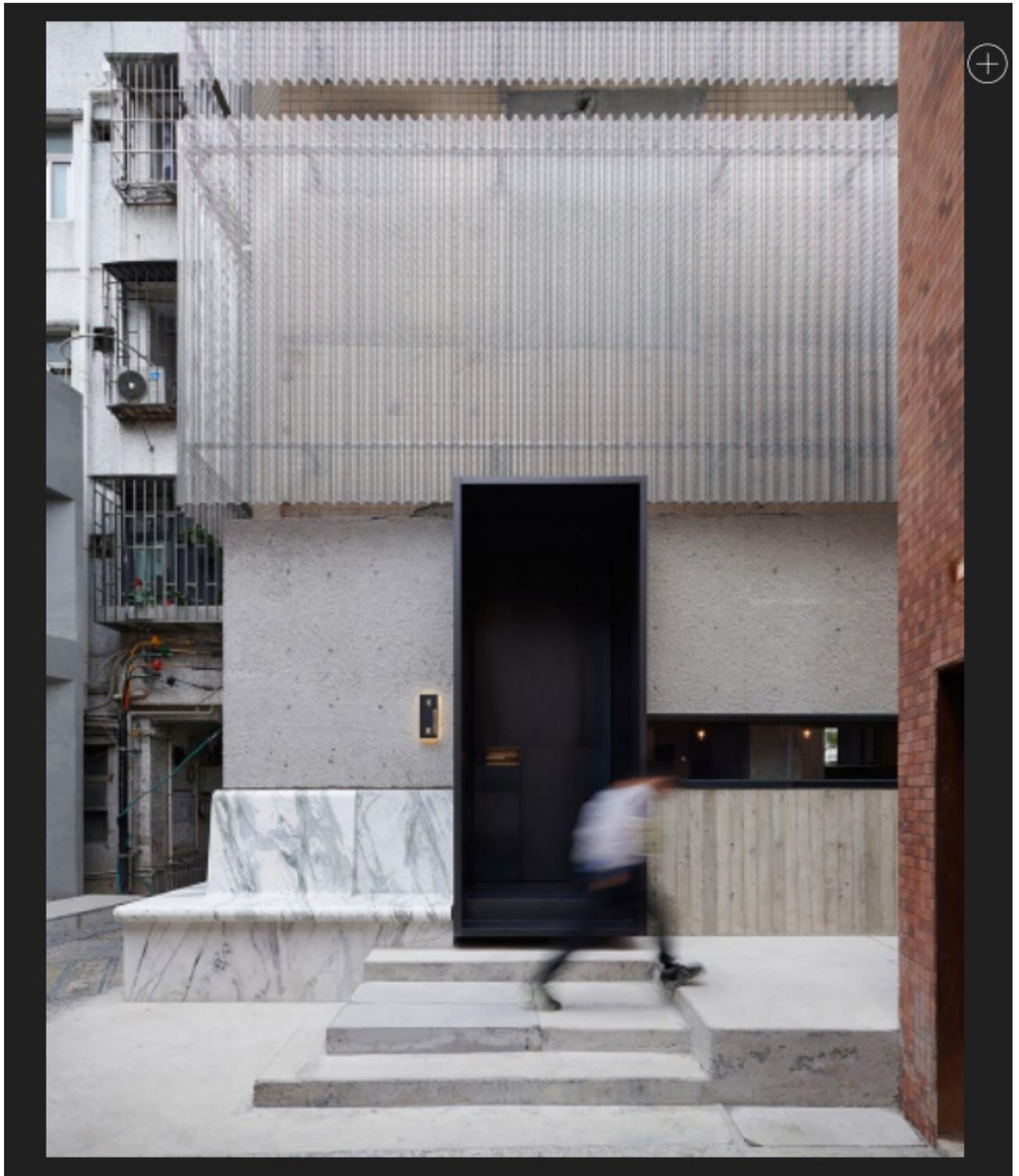
Nantou City is situated at the heart of Shenzhen, a burgeoning city with astonishing growth, that has evolved from a well-heel ancient capital to the overcrowded inner city it is now. Visitors today are immediately immersed in the tightly knit alleys, plazas and dead-ends, where residents, street vendors, unsupervised children, nomads alike roam.

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**Neri&Hu** designed the transformation of the building inspired by the bustling and dense environment of the alleys of the city of Nantou, paying special attention to the relationship of citizens with the scenes of daily life.

To generate this perception, a series of urban openings were made, which they called "urban incisions" to generate a new public area inside the previously private apartment block. At the same time, the openings expose the many layers of building materials and structures, as if it was an archaeological site, generating unexpected dialogues between past and present.



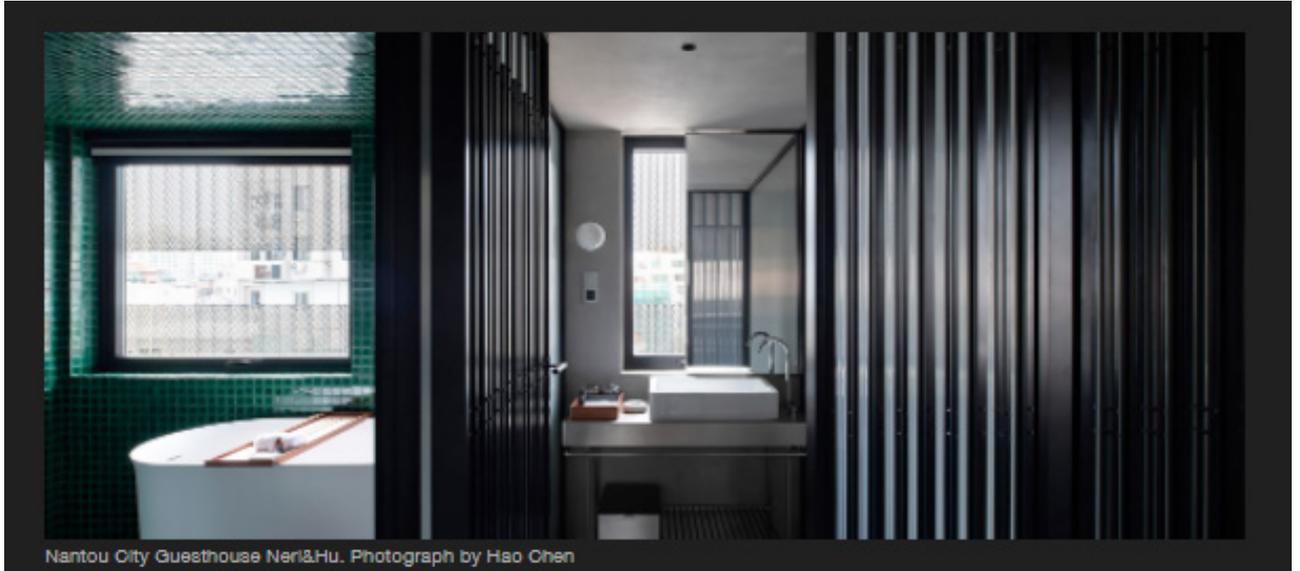
Nantou City Guesthouse Neri&Hu. Photograph by Hao Chen

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### Project description by Neri&Hu

Urban Village, or Cheng-Zhong-Cun, is a phenomenon where the remnants of pre-industrial settlements are nestled amidst a seemingly modern metropolis. Nantou City, the site of Neri&Hu’s adaptive reuse project for an eleven-room guesthouse, is an example of such an urban village. Situated at the heart of Shenzhen, a burgeoning city with astonishing growth, Nantou City has evolved from a well-heeled ancient capital to the overcrowded inner city it is now. Visitors today are immediately immersed in the tightly knit alleys, plazas and dead-ends, where residents, street vendors, unsupervised children, nomads alike roam.

Inspired by the vibrant milieu of the alleyways in Nantou City, the project seeks to reflect on the cultural heritage of the mundane. Scenes of every day—people, objects and their settings—are the primary source material for design. To celebrate life in the urban village, the existing structure was cut into massing strategy, allowing such “urban incisions” to foster a new public realm on the inside of the previously private apartment block. At the same time, the excavation revealed the many material layers and building structures as if at an archaeological site, only to allow new interventions to instigate unexpected dialogues between the past and the present.



Nantou City by Jeremiah Neri Studio

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Throughout the research and design process for the Nantou City Guesthouse, Svetlana Boym’s writings on the topic of reflective nostalgia have guided the thinking behind the project. Rather than simply mimicking the past for its superficial material effects, the project has sought to unearth the possibilities of certain kinds of past that could invigorate our contemporary culture. A tectonic language was developed to articulate two divergent treatments that probe the notion of urban layering and the embracing of fragments: that of light, screen-like cladding as the major façade element, and the other a heavier, expressive assemblage to contrast as a skyline “capping” atop.

Like the bustling scenes in the alleyways below, the roofscape across the Nantou urban village has a life of its own, with makeshift gardens and vegetable farms popping up along the jagged skyline. To reframe views of this ever-evolving village, a flat floating roof is installed to create a dramatic panorama of the street life below, and a new public ground above. Housing public spaces and service functions, the metallic monoliths of the rooftop play on vernacular add-ons, which are much sought after by space-starved attic-level residents.



Façade by Jeremiah Neri Studio

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To engage with the uniquely organic circulation that is quintessential to Nantou's urban fabric, the guesthouse's access and public realms are designed to be woven back into the network of intricate alleyways found on site. The new entrance to the guesthouse is created by extending a side street directly into the heart of the building as if to invite neighbours and friends into one's private home.

Old and new are juxtaposed throughout the building to celebrate ruins. Once the visitor arrives at the building, the public gesture of opening up the building along the urban axis is turned upward. An existing stairwell that had previously connected all nine tenement floors was now cut open and expanded to create a new vertical courtyard. Natural elements are allowed to pass through from the open façades to the side and a light well above. A new metal stair suspended within the vertical courtyard takes the visitor on a journey to the guest rooms on the mid-levels, and finally to the public rooftop gardens.



Rooftop by Runzi Zhu

To cut does not simply connote destruction, but also creation, in this case, of spaces and meanings. By absorbing the urbanity into the building, Nantou City Guesthouse in turn makes its private history legible and becomes fully ingrained in the ebb and flow of the city. In that transformation, the self-healing incision opens a new portal into as much as the past, as the mundane yet singular present.

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Architects	<b>Neri&amp;Hu Design and Research Office.</b> Architect in charge.- Guo Xien, Hu Rushan. Host Senior Associate.- Chen Jianquan. Senior Associate.- Zhang Jinying. Associate.- Xu Jian. Interior Design.- Neri&Hu Design Lab.	+
Design team	Yang Bingxin, Wang Dian, Cheng Ningxin, Ye Fan, Bernardo Taliani de Marchio, Jia Cheng, Tang Xiaotang, Li Jieqi, Zheng Pengpeng, Zhou Yuanyang, Yu Qichenyun, Wang Zhikang, Shu Tong, Song Zhentai, Liu Kaini, Huang Huizi, Wang Luqi.	+
Collaborators	Design Management.- Vanke Group Urban Research Institute. Local Design Institute (Architecture).- Shenzhen Bowan Architectural Design Office (General Partnership).	+
Client	Shenzhen Vanke Development Co., Ltd.	
Contractors	General contractor.- Shenzhen Western Urban Construction Engineering Co., Ltd. Curtain Wall.- Shanghai Junuo Industrial Co., Ltd., Shenzhen Western Urban Construction Engineering Co., Ltd.	+
Area	GFA- 1,370 sqm.	
Dates	2020-2021.	
Location	Nantou City, Nanshan District, Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, China.	
Photography	<b>Hao Chen.</b>	
		
	<b>LYNDON NERI - ROSSANA HU. NERI AND HU</b>	
	<p><b>Neri&amp;Hu Design and Research Office</b>, founded in 2004 by partners Lyndon Neri and Rossana Hu, Neri&amp;Hu Design and Research Office is an inter-disciplinary architectural design practice based in Shanghai, China. Neri&amp;Hu works internationally providing architecture, interior, master planning, graphic, and product design services. Currently working on projects in many countries, Neri&amp;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.</p>	
	<p><b>Lyndon Neri</b> is a Founding Partner of Neri&amp;Hu Design and Research Office, an inter-disciplinary international architectural design practice based in Shanghai, China. In 2014, Wallpaper* announced Neri&amp;Hu as 2014 Designer of The Year. In 2013, Mr. Neri was inducted into the U.S. Interior Design Hall of Fame with his partner Ms. Rossana Hu. The practice was the 2011 INSIDE Festival Overall Winner, won AR Awards for Emerging Architecture 2010 by Architectural Review and was selected as one of the Design Vanguard in 2009 by Architectural Record. Mr. Neri received a Master of Architecture at Harvard University and a Bachelor of Architecture at the University of</p>	