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PORTFOLIO



LYNDON NERI AND
ROSSANA HU LEAD
AWARD-WINNING
FIRM NHOHO
(PHOTO CREDIT:
JIA XI YANG AND
ZHU ZHE)

SPACE

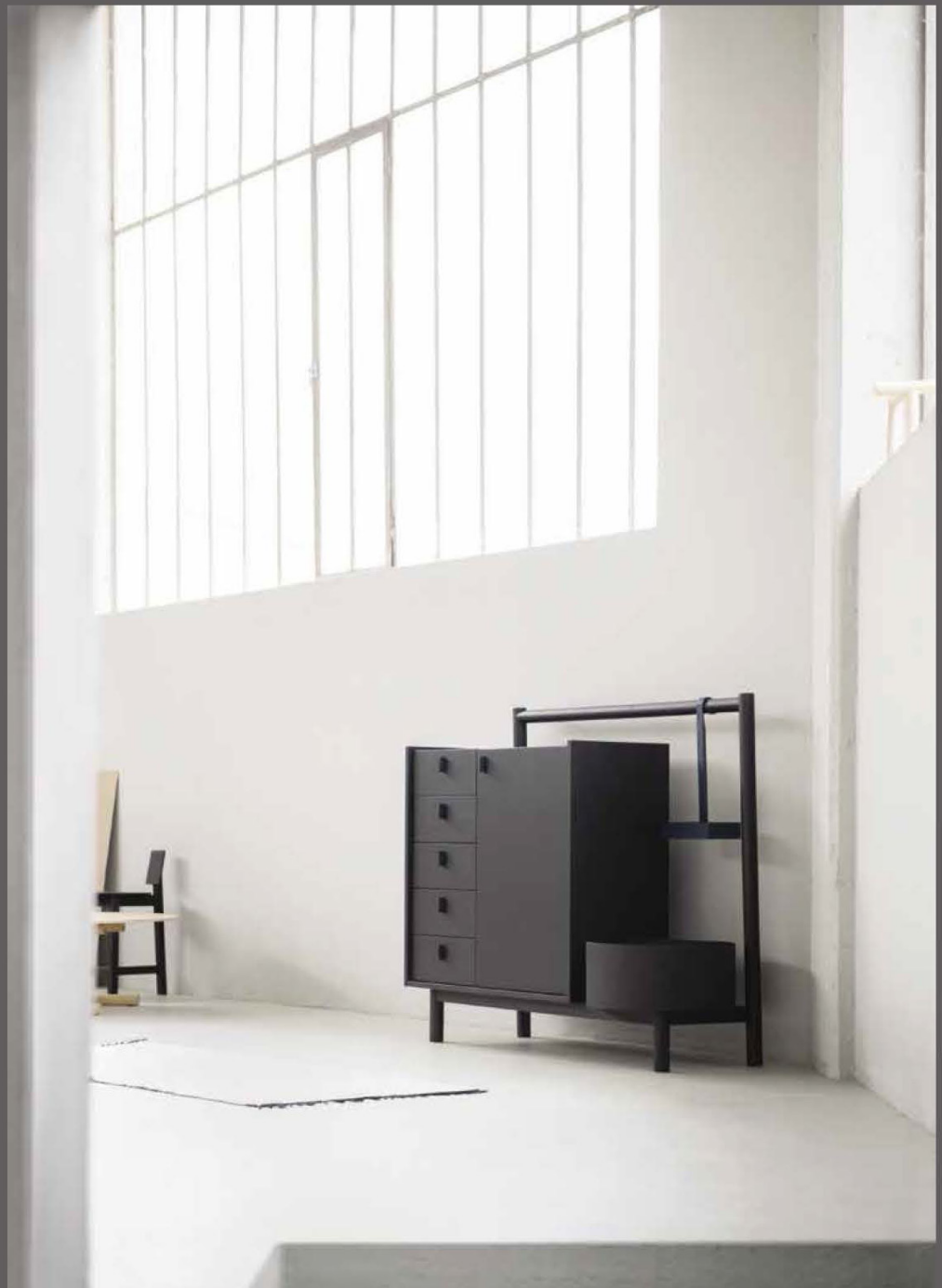
REFRAMING THE PAST

There is much that modernity can learn from the past,
highlights progressive studio Neri&Hu Design and
Research Office through its original portfolio of works.

BY LUO JINGMEI



SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION
SERGIO BOSSON • ISAKI HONMA • MARK KOSZILL • THOMAS RUFF • TONY C. TAN



THE UMU COLLECTION FOR JAPANESE DESIGN BRAND ARIAKE WAS INSPIRED BY THE CHINESE AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY OF XU SHI XIANG SHENG (虚实相生), REFERRING TO THE DICHOTOMY OF SOLID AND VOID COMING TOGETHER TO CREATE A SPACE. (PHOTO BY SEBASTIAN STADLER)



THE QIUJIANG MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS IN XI'AN INSERTS A 'MONUMENT' INTO THE URBAN FABRIC. (PHOTO BY ZHU RUNZI)

Staying at Kimpton Da-an is a wonderful way to understand the design sensibilities of Neri&Hu Design and Research Office (NHDRO) – the Shanghai-based studio known for creating buildings and spaces that dexterously interprets cultural and contextual nuances without falling into kitsch. Simple tiles in the lobby and guest bathrooms are a nod to the ubiquitous tilework found in Taipei's alleyways, while intricate metalwork recall the window and façade details in the surrounding neighborhood of the quaint Da-an district.

The hotel embodies "a sense of calmness and respite to counter the busy streets of Taipei without losing the rich essence of what makes the city an interesting and vibrant place," explains Rossana Hu, who co-founded the award-winning Shanghai-based studio together with her husband and architect Lynd on Neri.

She continues, "It's important to note that these experiences don't necessarily have to be understood directly, but that we wanted to form relationships between modern design elements and the local

history of the place. Hence, the experience of the connection aren't always obvious, but takes time to be realized and understood; it is in the discovery process that the design is made accessible and relevant."

This approach is palpable in the studio's other works, which look good in photographs, but more importantly, leave lasting impressions when experienced in person. The details and spatial qualities reflect a high level of thought and authenticity that stem not from following trends, but from deep research into original archetypes and craft, and appropriating them in contemporary ways. The studio's excellent grasp of proportion and scale also help to bring about refreshing encounters of space.

There is, for example, the House of Remembrance, inspired by the siheyuan (traditional Chinese courtyard house) that views the courtyard as a unifying space for multiple generations, and whose exaggerated pitched roof writes large the 'under one roof' familial symbolism while paying homage to the inhabitants' memories of the former house with a similar roof form typical of colonial black-and-white bungalows.



THE LOBBY OF KIMPTON DA'AN IN TAIPEI, WHERE A RESIDENTIAL BLOCK WAS TRANSFORMED INTO A CHIC HOTEL FEATURING MANY OF THE STUDIO'S FURNITURE DESIGNS. (PHOTO BY PEDRO PEGENAUITE)

In the case of the Ms MIN retail space in Shanghai, wooden structures hung with cloth that function as lightweight partitions pay homage to the craft of weaving done by hand looms in ancient Chinese villages. Stacked and inlaid curved roof tiles on the floor provide interesting texture while alluding to old village houses.

While the couple work as a team, their individuality also contribute to the completeness and complexity of their projects. "We work very organically depending on the time, availability, and interest. Both our aesthetic senses are quite similar, and we both usually share the same big picture for the projects. We have different strengths and make up for each other's weaknesses. Lyndon is better at the concept stage, and is very good with working with sketches and drawings," reveals Hu.

Her forte, on the other hand, comes through at the project development stage. "I work better with words and thoughts rather than drawings, she elaborates. Hu grew up in Taipei, while Neri's early childhood was spent in the Philippines. Neri moved to the United States for part of his high school education when he was 15. Similarly, Hu was 12 when her family relocated to the United States, where both their families met.

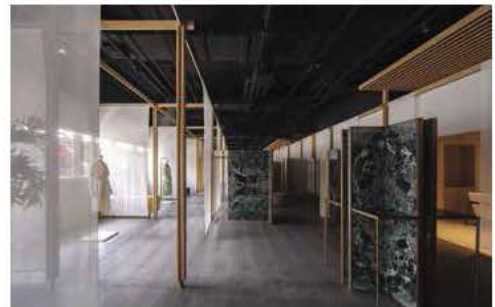
After graduating from architecture school, Hu and Neri worked at Michael Graves & Associates. 18 years ago, the couple left for Shanghai to work on a project for the firm. They eventually decided to settle there permanently with their three children and established their furniture retail shop The Design Republic in 2004, and NHDR0 in 2006. While in the city, they became attuned to China's rich architectural heritage that has become inspiration for many of their works.

"Ever since we established our practice in Shanghai, we have been fascinated by the concept of 'nostalgia.' 'Reflective nostalgia' has long been the research motif of Neri & Hu. It dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging, and does not shy away from contradictions of modernity, [compared to] 'restorative nostalgia' that [simply reconstructs elements of the past]. Hence, many of the studio's projects offer a productive means to engage with issues of heritage, collective memory, displacement, and urban renewal," expounds Hu.

This is evident not only in the studio's architectural and interior projects, but also in the furniture and objects it designs. To date, the studio has collaborated with brands like Arflex, Ariake, Agape, Artemide, Classicon, De La Espada, Poltrona Frau, and Fritz Hansen, among others.

In the recent Milan Fair that was held from 15 to 21 April, new products include the Solice armchair for Arflex, where a thin metal frame defines the feet, legs, armrests, and back support as one continuous line, giving the piece a feeling of lightness. There were also new products for Cassina, Ento, Stellar Works and Valcucine.

Be it "objects of intimate daily use" or "vessels of inhabitation", the studio's ethos remains consistent – to bring a refreshing take to modern life, drawing up on the richness collective history provides. [E]



THE DESIGN OF FASHION SHOP MS MIN IN SHANGHAI'S TAIKOO LI ABSTRACTS ELEMENTS OF A TRADITIONAL FABRIC ATELIER HIGHLIGHTS CRAFTSMANSHIP, RICH MATERIALITY AND A DOMESTIC SENSIBILITY. (PHOTO BY ZHU RUNZI)