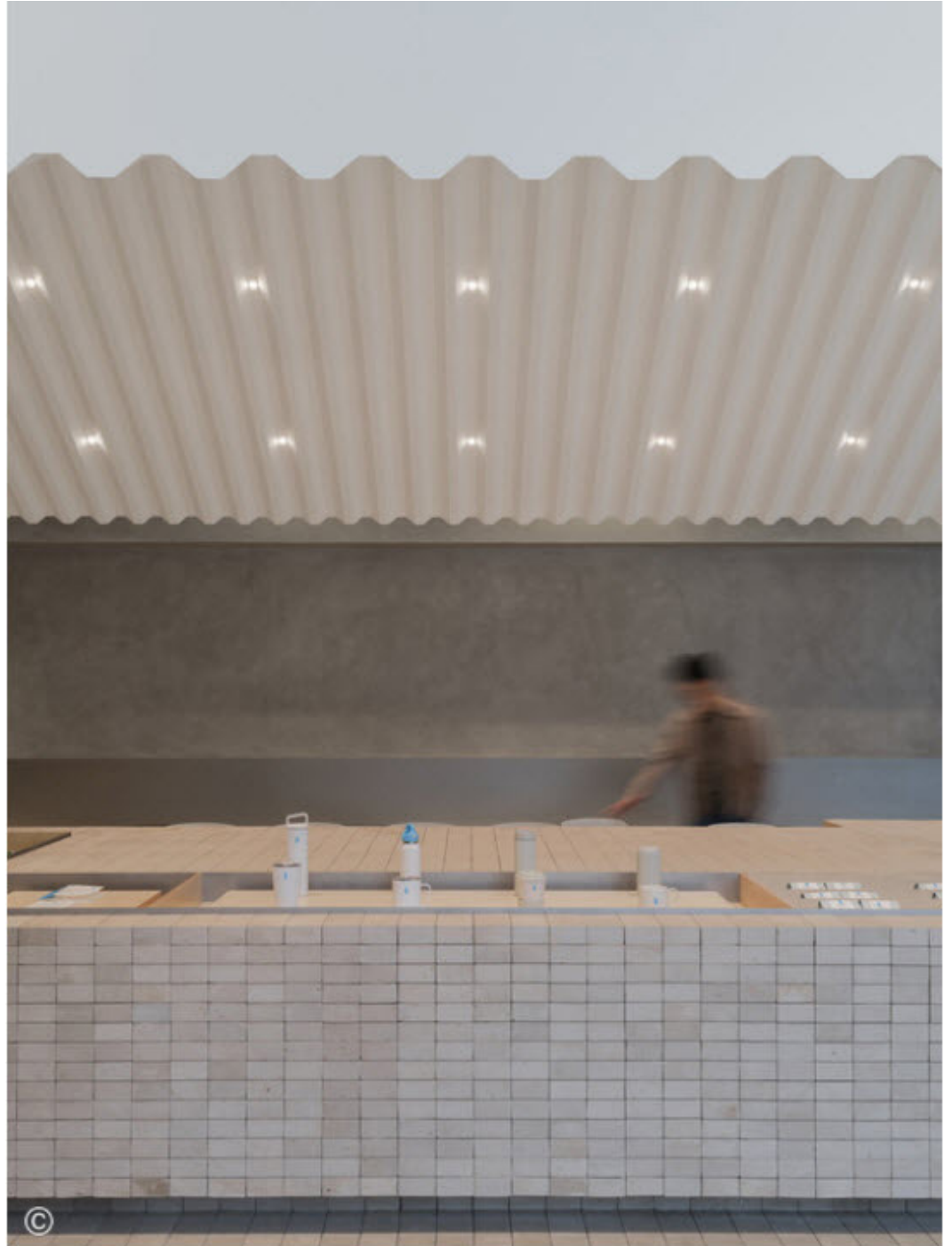


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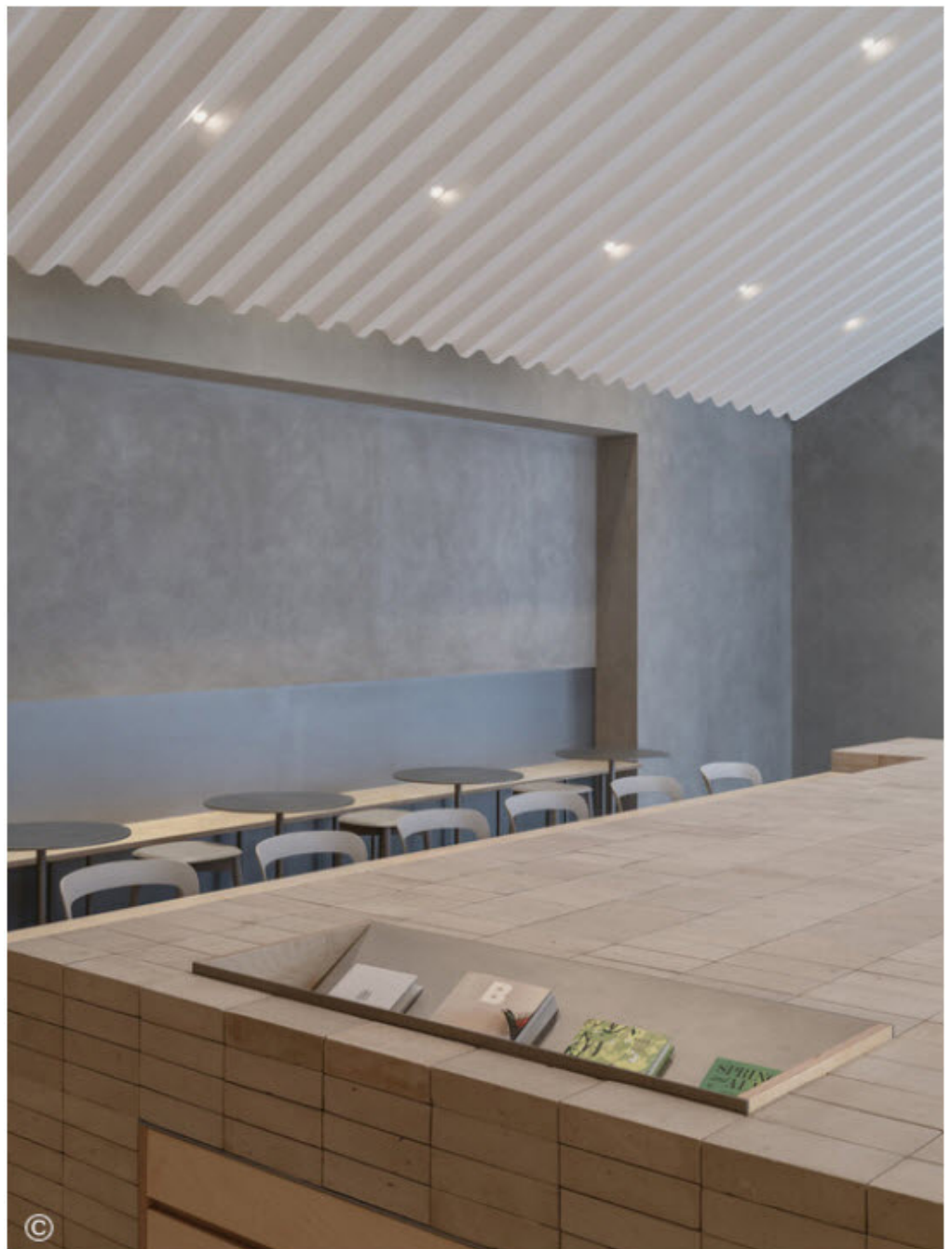
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Text description provided by the architects. Shanghai's Columbia Circle began as a country club for expatriates in the 20s, became an industrial park in the 50s with the addition of 11 buildings, and most recently was renovated by OMA in 2016 into a vibrant mixed-use hub, now regarded as one of Shanghai's most successful urban regeneration projects. In the southern portion of Columbia Circle, where the emphasis is on public cultural activity spaces, Blue Bottle Coffee commissioned Neri&Hu to design a cafe that would exemplify their brand value of community culture, inviting people to connect and exchange over coffee.



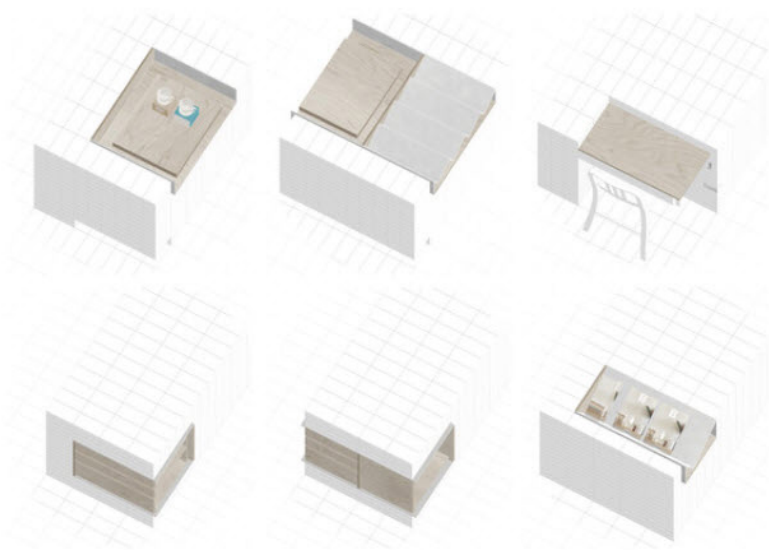
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Neri&Hu was inspired to create an implied sense of domesticity, an imprint of “home,” to reflect on the essence of inhabitation in a condition where things surrounding are constantly shifting and changing with the pace of the city.



As Rachel Whiteread argues in her work "the connection between architectural absence and memory," the negative form of a once-existing building can be employed as a visual reproduction of "traces" that elicit sentiments of attachment to one's home. Neri&Hu uses a white suspended form in the negative shape of an archetypal roof, as if a mould were used to cast a house in place, including the imprint of the corrugated lines of roof drainage on its surface.

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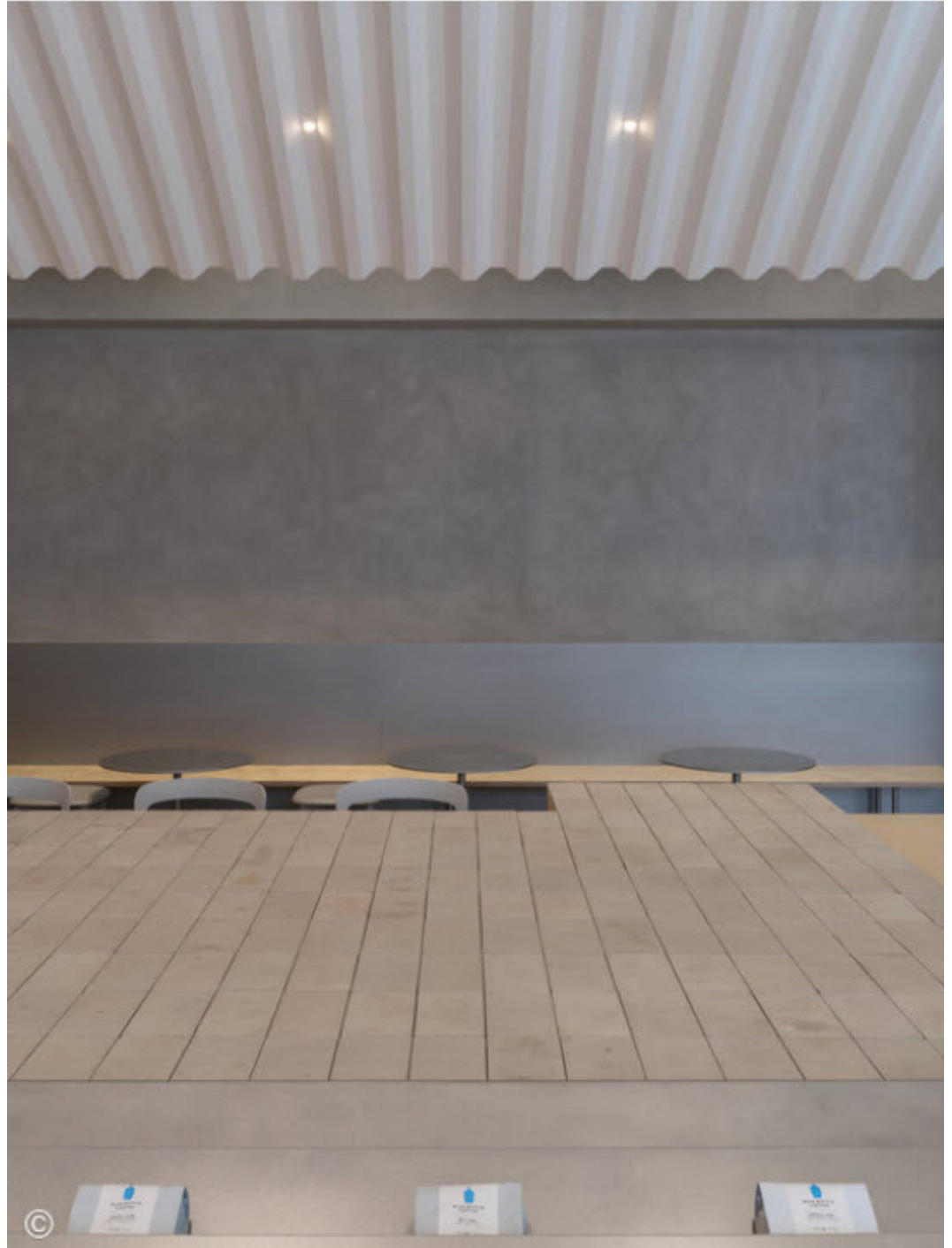


Underneath it, a continuous surface of recycled clay bricks and plaster reveals a house whose finishes have been stripped away down to the subtle outlines of a building footprint and traces on the surface and neighboring facade. Even if the building is no longer visible in the physical world, the traces it leaves in our individual or collective memories serve as a source of nostalgia and remembering.

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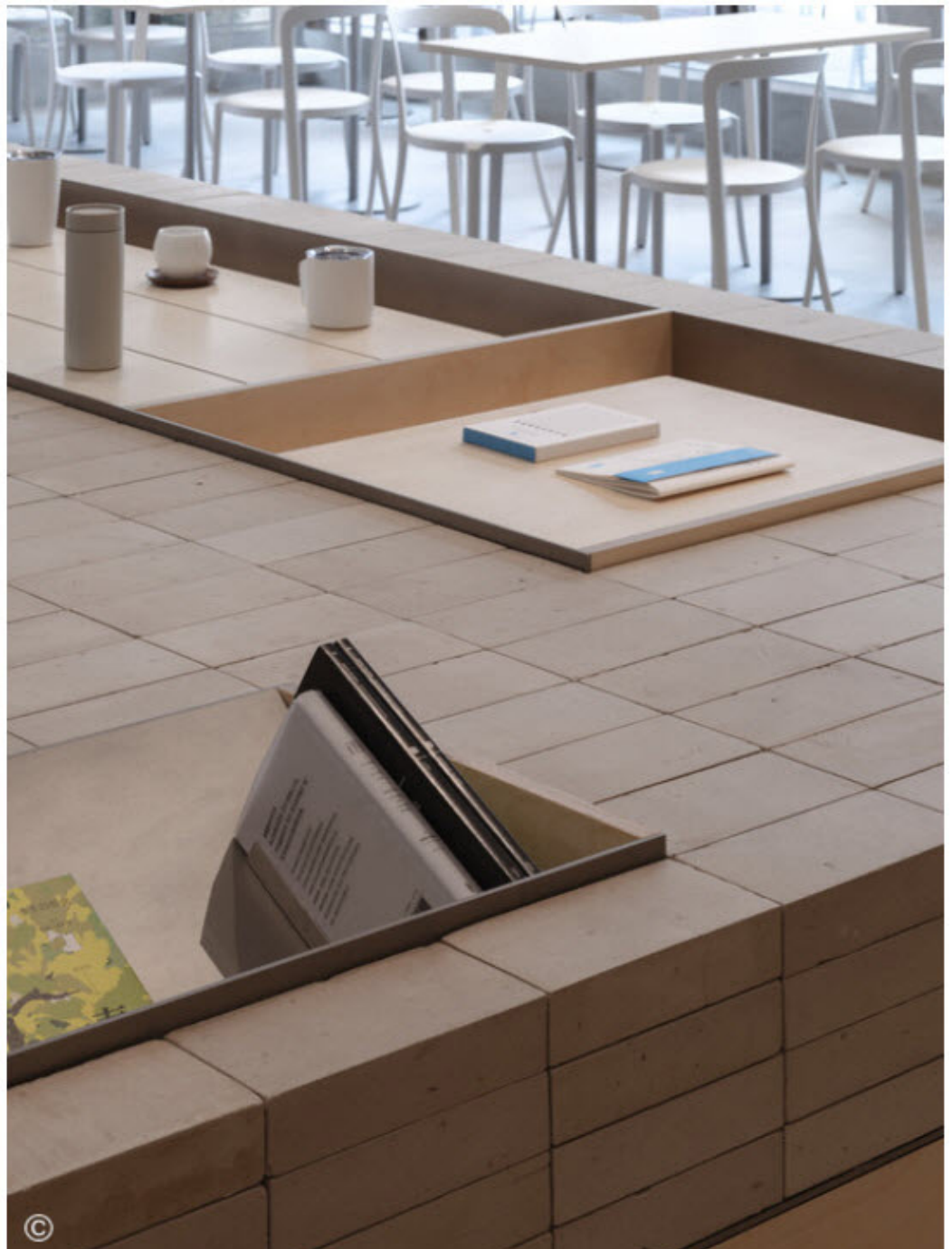
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Despite the physical absence of the house, people may still feel the spatial experience of being shielded by the roof when they are under the negative shape of the eaves. The coffee-making bar and multi-functional platform are situated under the white mass. Upon entering the space through the main entrance, people can select products and wait in line to place their orders alongside the merchandise display area, while browsing books, and finally take a seat around the floor to enjoy a cup of coffee.



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The multi-functional floor takes up the center of the area, resulting in a circular flow, with tables and chairs distributed around its perimeter. With the centralized focal point of an absent house, the “imprint” invites patrons to partake as a community in the various rituals of daily life and delight in new potential encounters and gatherings.

