

# perspective

July/August 2017

INSPIRING ARCHITECTURE &amp; DESIGN

www.perspectiveglobal.com



## NATURAL SELECTION

How a tourism centre in Guilin is changing the cultural landscape

### + 40 UNDER 40 2017

- The winners
- The forum
- The party

**Rathbone Square, London**  
—p.22

**TRIM house, by Apollo Architects**  
—p.28

**WeWork Hong Kong, by Nelson Chow**  
—p.42

**Q&A: Ma Yansong**  
—p.88

**Magic carpets: Omar Khan's rugs**  
—p.136

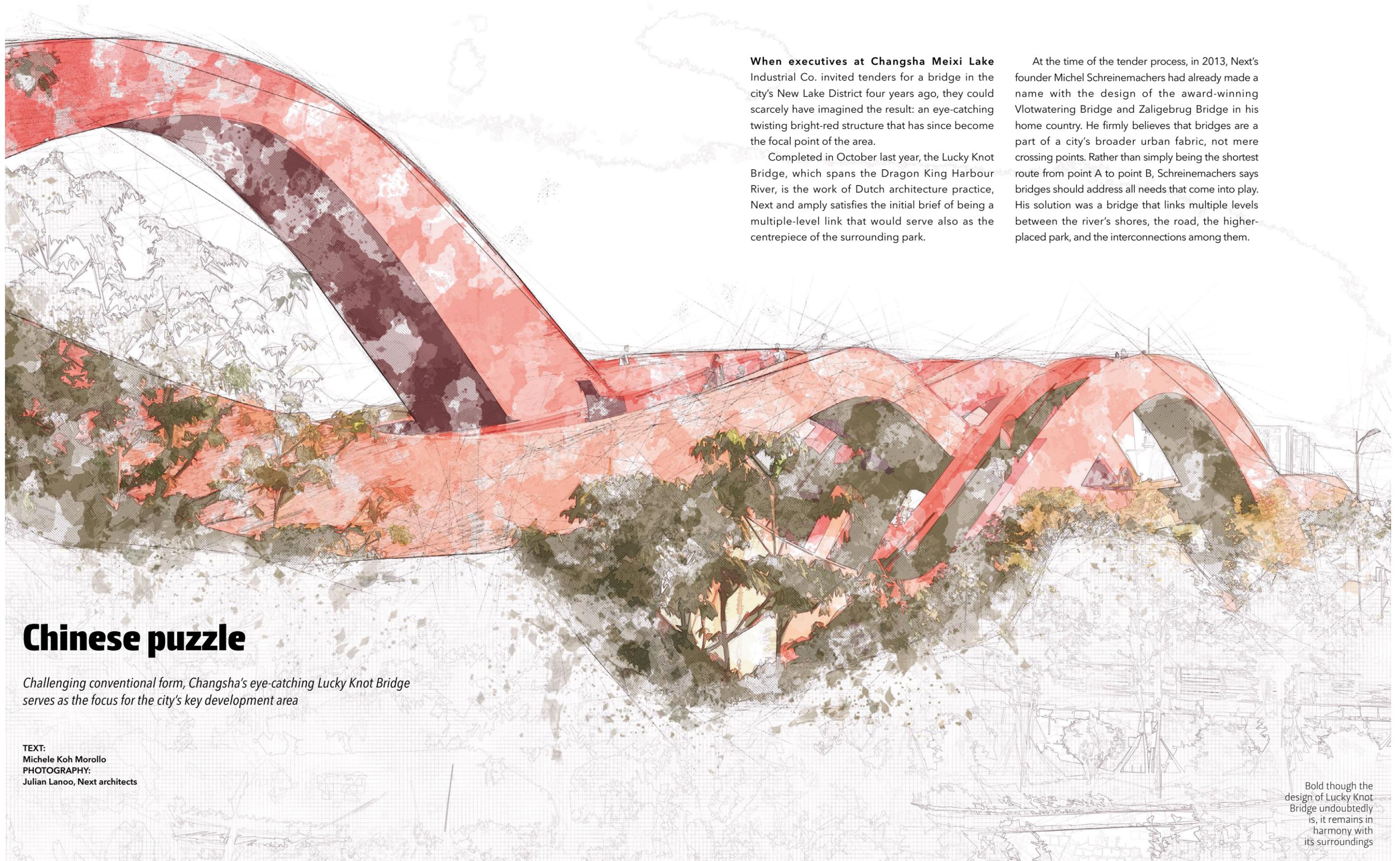
**Conservation architecture in Sichuan**  
—p.90

**Gray Box, Guangdong**  
—p.98

**The magnificent seven: leading Chinese designers**  
—p.104



HK\$48  
US\$18  
€15



When executives at Changsha Meixi Lake Industrial Co. invited tenders for a bridge in the city's New Lake District four years ago, they could scarcely have imagined the result: an eye-catching twisting bright-red structure that has since become the focal point of the area.

Completed in October last year, the Lucky Knot Bridge, which spans the Dragon King Harbour River, is the work of Dutch architecture practice, Next and amply satisfies the initial brief of being a multiple-level link that would serve also as the centrepiece of the surrounding park.

At the time of the tender process, in 2013, Next's founder Michel Schreinemachers had already made a name with the design of the award-winning Vlotwatering Bridge and Zaligebrug Bridge in his home country. He firmly believes that bridges are a part of a city's broader urban fabric, not mere crossing points. Rather than simply being the shortest route from point A to point B, Schreinemachers says bridges should address all needs that come into play. His solution was a bridge that links multiple levels between the river's shores, the road, the higher-placed park, and the interconnections among them.

## Chinese puzzle

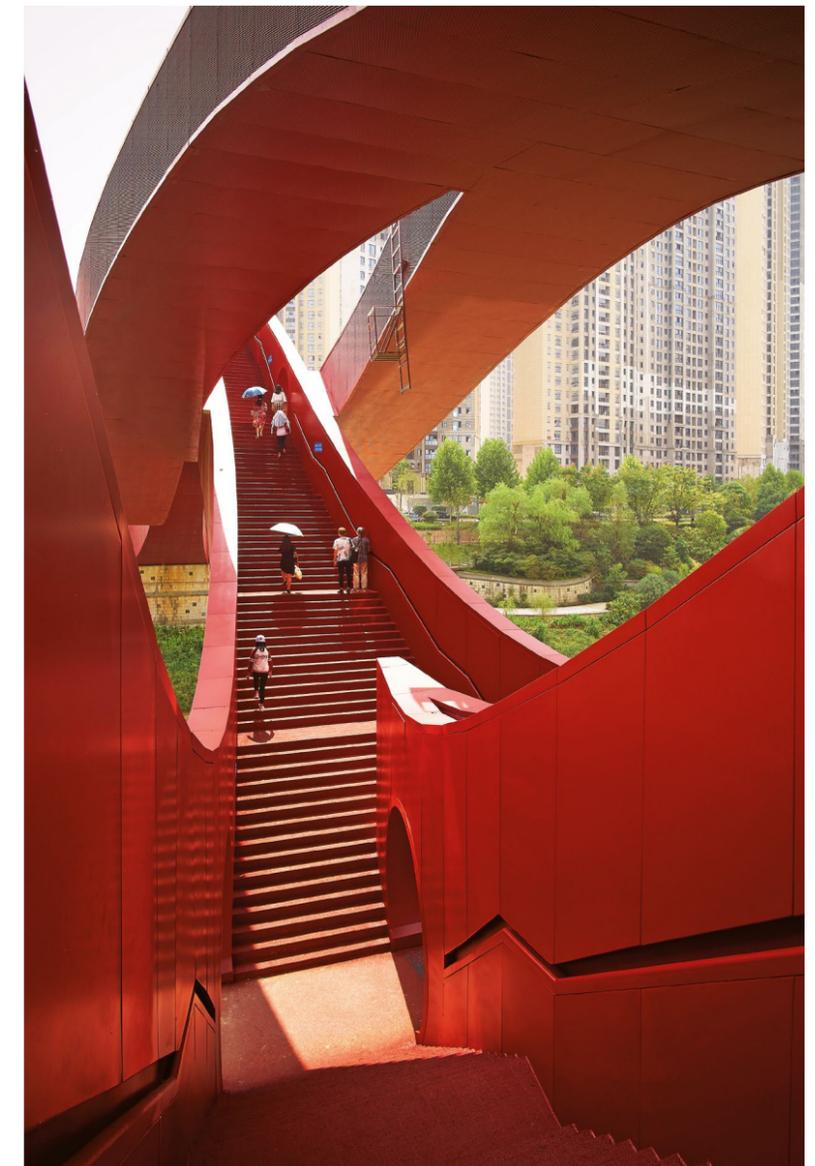
*Challenging conventional form, Changsha's eye-catching Lucky Knot Bridge serves as the focus for the city's key development area*

TEXT:  
Michele Koh Morollo  
PHOTOGRAPHY:  
Julian Lanoo, Next architects

Bold though the design of Lucky Knot Bridge undoubtedly is, it remains in harmony with its surroundings



Right and facing page  
Lucky Knot Bridge is far more than just a link – it combines Chinese cultural references with a pleasing yet practical functionality



"This context called for a unique gesture to connect and inspire passers-by," says Schreinemachers. "I think it was the site-specificity, alongside the cultural references to Chinese traditions, that won us the project."

Though Lucky Knot Bridge certainly breaks with the traditional bridge model, it remains firmly attached to its cultural context, its bold design existing in harmony with its surroundings. "In ancient decorative Chinese folk art, the knot stands for luck and prosperity," says the architect, who sought in the design a way to join the multiple streams of people that pass at different heights from one side of the river to the other. "These streams overlap and intertwine, resulting in a

strong Möbius strip that also refers back to a Chinese knot," he says. "Once we developed the basic shape of the bridge, the main challenge lay in designing the intersection that enables pedestrians to go from one route to the other."

Because recreation is an important aspect of the park, the bridge features an LED light show, which has become a highlight of the area. "The developers created a light show especially for the bridge," says Schreinemachers. "The whole side and bottom of the bridge is clad with a steel mesh that has enough openings to let the light through. Tour boats can stop to enjoy the show. The Lucky Knot is much more than a mere connection between shores. It also functions as light art."

A high degree of cooperation between the Next teams in Amsterdam and Beijing was crucial to the project's success. From the start, the Dutch architects worked closely with their Chinese colleagues, led by the firm's Beijing partner Jiang Xiaofei. The initial 2013 designs were judged to be too conservative, while the Beijing team's proposals were thought to be too elaborate; a comprehensive process of revision and refinement resulted in the winning design.

"It was crucial to combine the Dutch team's experience in the field of bridges and water management with the Beijing team's knowledge of the local context and understanding of the specific demands of the client," says Schreinemachers.

Today, the bridge is a destination in its own right, not only for Changsha residents, but also for visitors to the city. Its striking form, which can be seen from afar, has been an integral element in the development of the New Lake District. Its design has attracted plaudits from overseas, too. It was recently named by CNN as one of the most "spectacular new bridges that break the mould" and it was shortlisted for AD100 2017 in China.

"The Lucky Knot is more than a bridge and a connection between two riverbanks," says Schreinemachers. "It brings cultures, history, technology, art, architecture and spectacle together in a playful place where tradition and modernity meet." ●