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DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

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/ ISSUE 113, 2019/2020 · S\$8 /

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DAS LAB

NAMLY
HILLSIDE VILLA
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/ WORDS MICHELE KOH MOROLLO

MONOLITHIC, MONOCHROMATIC, MEDIATORY

The Waterfront Art Gallery in southern China's Nanchang City energises, connects, and beautifies its surroundings.





On the west bank of Nanchang City's Xianghu Lake is the Waterfront Art Gallery. Designed by Shanghai-headquartered Lacime Architects, it is an art museum that's both an architectural landmark and a gateway connecting the city's urban and nature zones.

The project is commissioned by China Vanke – one of China's leading urban and rural development and living services providers.

Its design evolved as a response to its surrounding geography, and is a striking contrast of massive volumes and green, manicured grounds.

The gallery sits between the intersection of Zhenjun Road and Yunjin Road, serving as an entryway from the city into a riverside.

SHAPED BY THE CONTEXT

The Ganjiang River separates the eastern and western sections of the city, and is the defining feature of Nanchang.

On the east, where the tributary Fuhe River flows into Xianghu Lake before emptying

/ 1
The rectangular gallery is grafted onto two courtyards.

/ 2
Waterfront Art Gallery is a museum that's both an architectural landmark and a gateway connecting the city's urban and nature zones.



into the Ganjiang, is a forested riverside recreational park with pedestrian trails. To the west are high-rise towers of a new town development.

One of obstacles the Lacime team faced was the existence of multi-lane highways that cut the museum's site off from the riverside park.

To circumvent this obstacle, and to open up the museum to the park landscape, they designed the museum's main structure as a narrow, box-girder-like, rectangular volume with its longest side overlooking the river to the north and south.

China Vanke also wanted to elevate the

terrain, create a green oasis within the urban area, and fill a gap between two cultural landmark sites: Wanshou Palace on the south bank of the Fuhe River, and Wanshou Tower on the north bank.

In response to these requests, the architects organised the museum's programme around a ring-shaped bridge and a walled courtyard.

"The topography of Nanchang City is shaped by the Fuhe River, which flows from the Tengwangge Delta. Relying on the typology concept, we embedded a sculptural ring bridge into the design," says the project's lead architect Song Zhaoqing.

/ ABOVE

A view of the water feature from the mid-section of the ringed-bridge shape, pedestrian ramp.



3



Song Zhaoqing,
Lead Architect,
Lacime Architects



4

“This bridge serves as both a connector for the main building, and as a response to the undercrossing tunnel in the adjacent street. We preserved the landscape features of the city and transformed the bridge into a major element of urban design.”

He also decided on an architectural form that functions as a space frame for the buildings around the site.

The opposite side of the ring bridge expands naturally to form the main part of the foyer, enabling the Wanshou Palace and Wanshou Tower to appear larger and

more majestic.

“The space accumulation on different scales, the replication of shapes on the plane and in the altitude bring a dynamic yet restrained and unique perception of these two buildings,” says Song.

A STREAMLINED HORIZONTALITY

He and his team chose a plane layout to enhance the art viewing experience and to provide the best possible circulation.

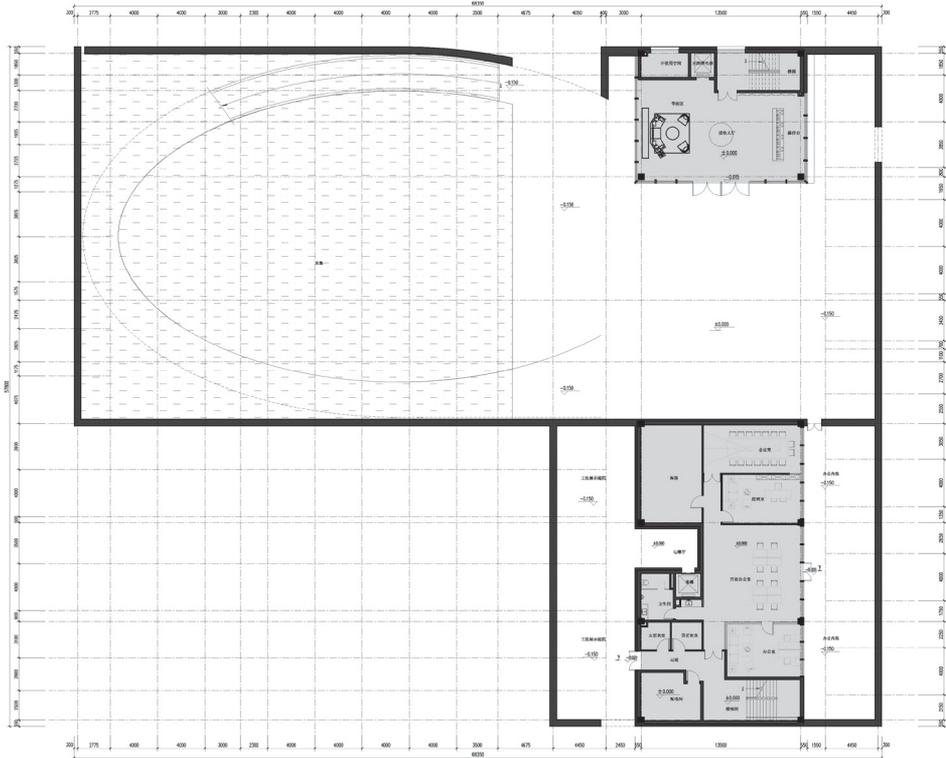
In doing so, he grafted a rectangular gallery onto the museum’s two courtyards,

/ 3-4

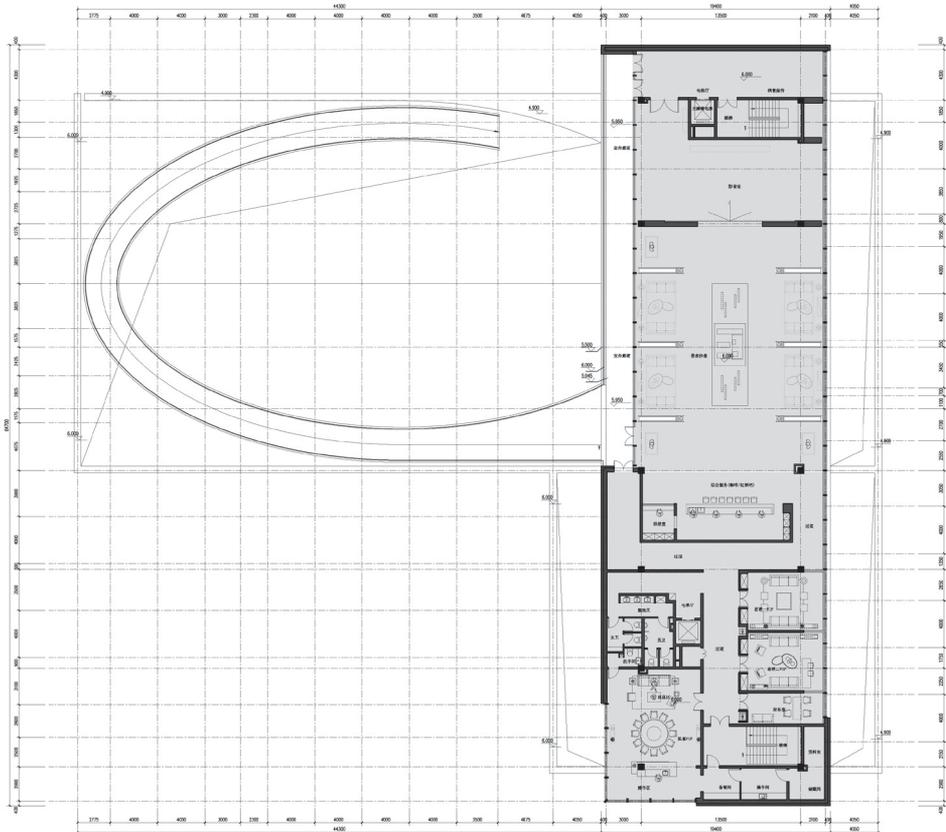
The walls and bearing courtyard wall emphasises the horizontal arrangement of the building.

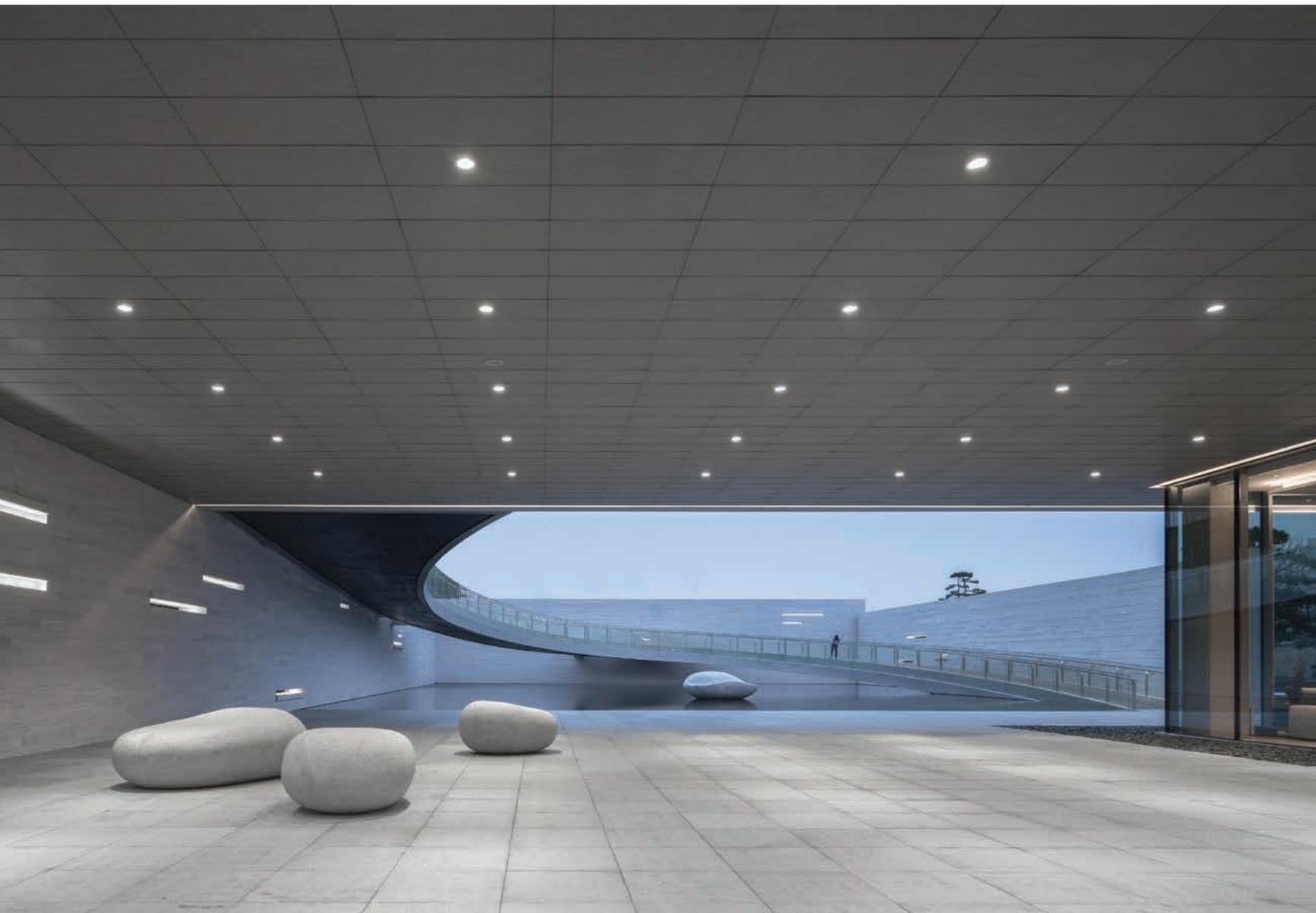
FLOOR PLANS

GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR





and arranged the reception hall, exhibition hall, and lounge horizontally.

“The lower courtyard opens to the north, and guides the spectators toward the entrance through the arc-shaped wall formed by the enclosed ring bridge.

“The office area is arranged vertically within the two courtyards, which are opened to the external courtyard on the south side,” says Song.

From the parking area, visitors enter the site through the low, ring-shaped pedestrian bridge set across a green resting area under the building’s 21m structure span.

They arrive at an inner courtyard, and from here, they can explore the gallery

from one of two starting points.

They can turn left and enter a glass enclosure containing the lounge of the museum’s first-floor entrance.

Or they can turn right and step onto a glass-walled ramp that spirals up three walls of the courtyard and looks down to the museum’s reflecting pool on the second floor, where the reception and exhibition halls are located.

The museum’s façade, courtyard walls, and terrace floors are clad in 19,000 grey, striated stone slabs, which give the building a dramatic, monochromatic appearance, and emphasises its streamlined horizontality.

/ ABOVE

The ring-shaped pedestrian bridge leads to a resting area under the building’s 21m structure span. From here, visitors can turn left and enter the glass-enclosed lounge of the museum’s first-floor entrance.

5-6
The building's
25-degree gray slab
walls create an affinity
with the ground and
water feature.



According to Song, incorporating the ring bridge structure was the biggest challenge with this project, but also the most important design decision.

"The one-sided suspended box girder concept that we decided on solved the critical problem in the design: how to integrate flexible and autonomous parts to form a cohesive whole.

"Together with the sculptural bridge, the structural design not only solves and realises the bearing functions, but also reveals the formal logic behind it.

"Our client's vision was for the museum to represent a morphological memory of the city by serving as a boundary between two different landscapes. I believe we have succeeded in helping them accomplish this," says Song.



A photograph of the Waterfront Art Gallery at dusk. The building features a long, curved walkway with a glass railing overlooking a body of water. The sky is a deep blue, and the building's facade is illuminated from within, showing horizontal lines. A person is visible walking on the walkway.

WATERFRONT ART GALLERY

LOCATION / NANCHANG, JIANGXI, CHINA
COMPLETION / 2018
SITE AREA / 4175.16M²
BUILDING AREA / 1702.93M²
GROSS FLOOR AREA / 1992.45M²
ARCHITECT / LACIME ARCHITECTS
LEAD ARCHITECT / SONG ZHAOQING
DEVELOPER / CHINA VANKE
INTERIOR FINISHING / LSDCASA
LANDSCAPE / LANDAU DESIGN
AWARDS / 2020 GERMAN DESIGN AWARD, GALLERY (WINNER); 2019 THE ARCHITECTURAL SOCIETY OF SHANGHAI CHINA – CREATION AWARD, PUBLIC BUILDING (MERIT)