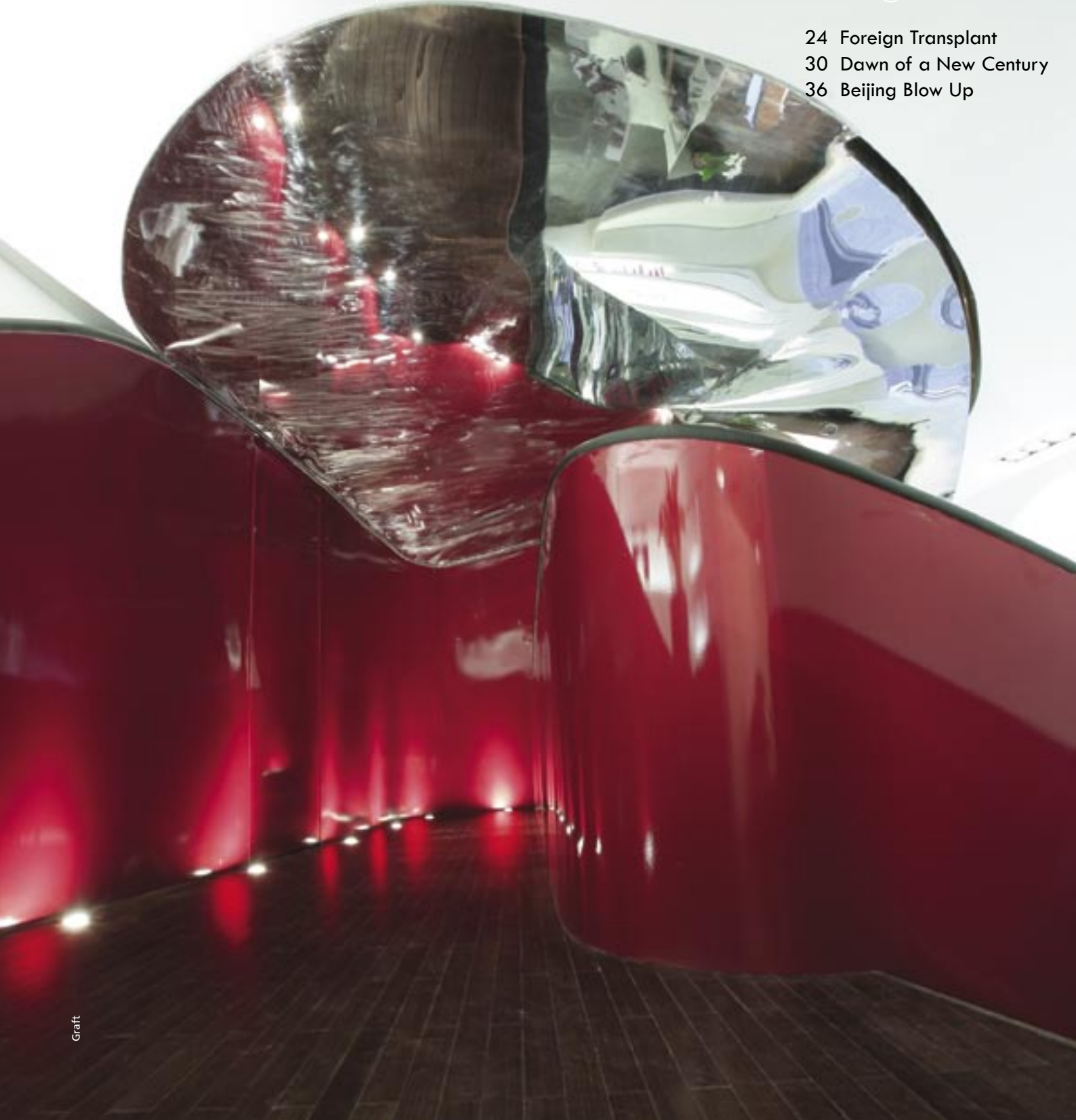


Features

Edited by Alex Pasternack

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FOREFIGHT

A fun-loving architecture firm is grafting its roots, from Berlin to Hollywood, into Beijing and beyond

WORDS BY ALEX PASTERNAK. PHOTOS BY SIMON LIM AND GRAFT



Gregor Hoheisel and the Graft Beijing team



Hair salons in China may evoke many things, but good design is rarely one of them. No wonder Eric Paris, at Beijing's Kerry Centre, looks like it came from another planet.

To connect the salon's ground floor with its newly acquired upper floors, the architects of Graft didn't simply build stairs in the middle of their white Naugahyde interior: they inserted a hulking, shining wave of metal right through its center. Made of mirrored stainless steel and lined with voluptuous matte maroon panels, the shocking *pièce de résistance*, looking like a hair curl from the future, offers visitors an opportunity to reflect on their haircut as well as their salon experience. "We were interested in this desire to look at yourself in the mirror," says Gregor Hoheisel, head of Graft's Beijing office. "The staircase allows thousands of possible distortions, like a fun house mirror."

If Eric Paris looks less like a Chinese hairdresser, and more akin to a Stanley Kubrick set, that's part of the point. Graft – which cut its teeth on futuristic, wavy designs for hotels, galleries and, yes, film sets – takes its name seriously, grafting design onto architecture, interiors to exteriors, computers to organic forms, a

German experience to an international one. "We like to combine elements, to create objects that evoke different readings," says Hoheisel. (The word "graft," once British slang for hard work, here refers to the process of transplanting one living thing onto another). "We're constantly eager to see the newest thing, to explore further."

It was this curiosity that first led Hoheisel's current partners, and university friends, Wolfram Putz, Thomas Willemeit, Lars Kruckeberg and Christoph Korner, to leave Germany and their concrete-and-glass Bauhaus education, to study in Los Angeles. There they enrolled in cutting-edge programs at UCLA and the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc), connecting with influential art critic Dave Hickey, who would later commission an exhibition design from the group. Shortly after graduating in 1998, the team was joined by Hoheisel, and commissioned to create a minimalist design for a small hip restaurant in North Hollywood. Graft was born. »





Style, substance: For the renovation of Eric Paris Salon, Graft mixed typical curves and upholstery with warm wood

Facing page: Part of the Make it Right project, the Pink Project by Graft and Brad Pitt envisions rebuilding a swath of New Orleans' hurricane-wracked Lower Ninth Ward with homes designed by a group of leading architects

Then, in true Hollywood fashion, came their big break: during routine work with a luxury home contractor, the firm was asked to rustle up some sketches for a small guesthouse in the Hollywood Hills. The client turned out to be Brad Pitt. And he turned out to be more than just a client.

"He started coming to help out in our studio," says Hoheisel. Pitt, who led the design process for the guesthouse and an adjoining concrete-and-glass studio, has also previously "interned" at the offices of Frank Gehry and OMA. But he works closest with Graft, where he has served as partner on certain projects, including a resort in the Turks and Caicos Islands. "He's an energetic, knowledgeable source of inspiration ... he is so much fun to work with because he's in a unique position to see the world." Hoheisel laughs: "He still claims he wants to end his movie career and become an architect."

The actor's ideas on space and lighting, borrowed from his experiences on set and with his own homes, have not been insignificant for the firm. Nor

has his star power. The firm's connection with Pitt, Hoheisel acknowledges, helped it gain exposure and larger projects. In just four years, Graft has expanded from a staff of 15 to 110, with offices in Los Angeles, Berlin, and Beijing. "Brad basically financed us for years. He has access to everything and everybody."

Last year, a burst of inspiration struck Pitt while he was shooting a film in Louisiana. He immediately called Graft to propose one of the firm's biggest projects to date: An ambitious attempt to rebuild 150 homes in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward, the area worst devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Part of the Make it Right Project, the venture began last December with the construction of ten prototype structures clad in bright pink fabric, a material chosen for its similarity to the green screens filmmakers use to shoot digital effects scenes.

For the second stage of the project, which involves the construction of 150 low-cost houses over the next two years, Graft and Pitt have called

for online donations (www.makeitrightnola.org) and commissioned pro bono designs from celebrated offices such as MVRDV and Shigeru Ban. Graft's own design proposal twists the typical low-slung "shotgun" house (as it's known in the local vernacular) into a jagged, airy design, with ecological features and hurricane-proofing.

"To be involved in this whole process has opened our minds to a much larger extent than typical conditions can," says Hoheisel, noting that the social and legal issues, and the project's media attention, presented new challenges for the design studio. "This isn't limited to architects just designing a house, but was related to so many areas that extend beyond architecture. It's about getting out of the ivory tower."

China demands a similar approach, if not a similar project, says Hoheisel. "There's an interest in getting out of these rosy projects, and working more on the other side of society – not the fancy five-star hotel lobby, but a down-to-earth housing project." Hoheisel acknowledges the high demand for low-cost housing in China: "In Beijing, schools and habitation for migrant workers are needed."

Though Hoheisel says architects working in China have a responsibility to include more social considerations in their design work, two key ingredients – time and money – are often lacking. "One of our biggest challenges is just getting paid," he chuckles. And then there's time. "I have to confess in the last months I've been too occupied with other things. Sometimes I think I need a nine-to-five job and just get some sleep."

Keeping him awake are projects across Asia, including a massive two-tower development in Dalian, a sustainability-minded hotel in Australia, a restaurant in Chengdu, and a street "cultural center" in Seoul. Since Hoheisel opened the local office in 2004 (after a two-year hiatus from Graft at the Beijing offices of German firm GNP), Graft Beijing has had to change offices three times to accommodate its growing staff, which now numbers 15. (Hoheisel's own family has grown too; he and his wife have a young daughter and are expecting twins in July. "I am settling more and more in Beijing.")

Despite its growth, the firm's founding members still seek to maintain their original collaborative approach. Hoheisel says all partners provide input on every project around the world by e-mail. "Mostly, we can tell the truth without worrying about animosity or hurting anybody's feelings. We'll send each other arsh emails, saying 'this is not good enough,' or »

Megan Grant



"THIS ISN'T LIMITED TO ARCHITECTS JUST DESIGNING A HOUSE, BUT WAS RELATED TO SO MANY AREAS THAT EXTEND BEYOND ARCHITECTURE... THERE'S AN INTEREST IN GETTING OUT OF THESE ROSY PROJECTS, AND WORKING MORE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF SOCIETY – NOT THE FANCY FIVE-STAR HOTEL LOBBY, BUT A DOWN-TO-EARTH HOUSING PROJECT"

"WE'LL SEND EACH OTHER HARSH E-MAILS, SAYING 'THIS IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH,' OR 'TRY IT THIS WAY,'" SAYS HOHEISEL. "BUT THE BEST MOMENTS ARE STILL SITTING AROUND THE TABLE, WORKING OVER IT TOGETHER WITH A BOTTLE OF WINE."



Graft's worldly partners: (left to right) Lars Kruckeberg, Gregor Hoheisel, Alejandra Lillo, Thomas Willemeit, and Wolfram Putz

'try it this way.' But the best moments are still sitting around the table, working over it together with a bottle of wine."

Last November, the firm moved into a new office at an old paint factory near the Beijing Art Museum, along with a branch of British firm SMC Alsop. The jubilant mood at the opening party, where architects danced and mingled over bottles of Tsingtao, seemed in line with Graft's modus operandi. "We do lots of fun spaces," says Hoheisel. "But this is not something I would like to limit ourselves to." If any place offers architects a step outside their boundaries, China may be it. In a sense, the party also seemed to register the enthusiasm foreign designers have for working in one of the world's biggest construction sites. "China is at the moment one of the capitals of modern architecture, in terms of what's tested and realized here. The sheer volume of opportunities is comparable only to what's going on in the Middle East."

The challenges are plentiful, too. For the Emperor Hotel, a boutique affair located

in an old three-story Tsinghua University guesthouse just to the east of the Forbidden City (see Concierge, p80), Graft was asked to incorporate traditional Chinese design to match the hotel's imperial mood. "As contemporary architects, we're not really interested in rebuilding historical buildings," says Hoheisel. Their solution was to demarcate the rooflines of the Forbidden City along each room's fake suede walls. The thick striations, or grooves, manage to blend with Graft's cinematic, futuristic design, even as they hint at a luxurious authority over the real emperors, who once ordered that no building be higher than their majestic palace (indeed, the rooftop bar and Jacuzzi overlook the imperial palace).


Executing the hotel's sleek, "pod"-like look – which echoes the style of hotels and clubs Graft has designed in places like Berlin and Las Vegas – has proven to be typically difficult in China, where construction can often be rough around the edges. "One also needs to understand what the living conditions of the



workers are here,” says Hoheisel. Whereas a furniture maker in the West would spend his time visiting showrooms, factory workers in China are “producing furniture that doesn’t apply to them,” he says. “How can you expect somebody to do something perfectly when they have never seen perfect?”

Graft’s experiences elsewhere in Asia have been relatively smoother. Hoheisel’s favorite project is a villa for a development in Taiwan called Next Gene 20. “The client could have made millions out of it by taking one architect and two or three variations of a villa, building it, selling it, and getting rich like hell.” Instead, the developer invited 20 architects to contribute, and asked stars Tadao Ando and Zaha Hadid to consult. “He treats the architects like gods,” gushes Hoheisel about the developer, who is his “absolute favorite client.”

Meanwhile, local hurdles play their part in energizing Hoheisel and his colleagues. “There are strong needs in China, in terms of having a higher standard of architecture.” A recent vacation in California reminded him of the greener pastures that lay abroad, and he admits that he is eager to participate in Graft’s projects in other parts of the world, including a museum in Moscow and a casino in Dubai. “You come back to Beijing and stand with hundreds of people on the taxi line. Fumes circle you, concrete mixers blast in your ear. You wonder why you’ve come back.”

However, as Hoheisel readily acknowledges, much is keeping him in the Middle Kingdom, and not just his growing family. “It’s the excitement and energy that makes it fun to be here,” he says. “And we’re always looking for ways to graft two different worlds.” 

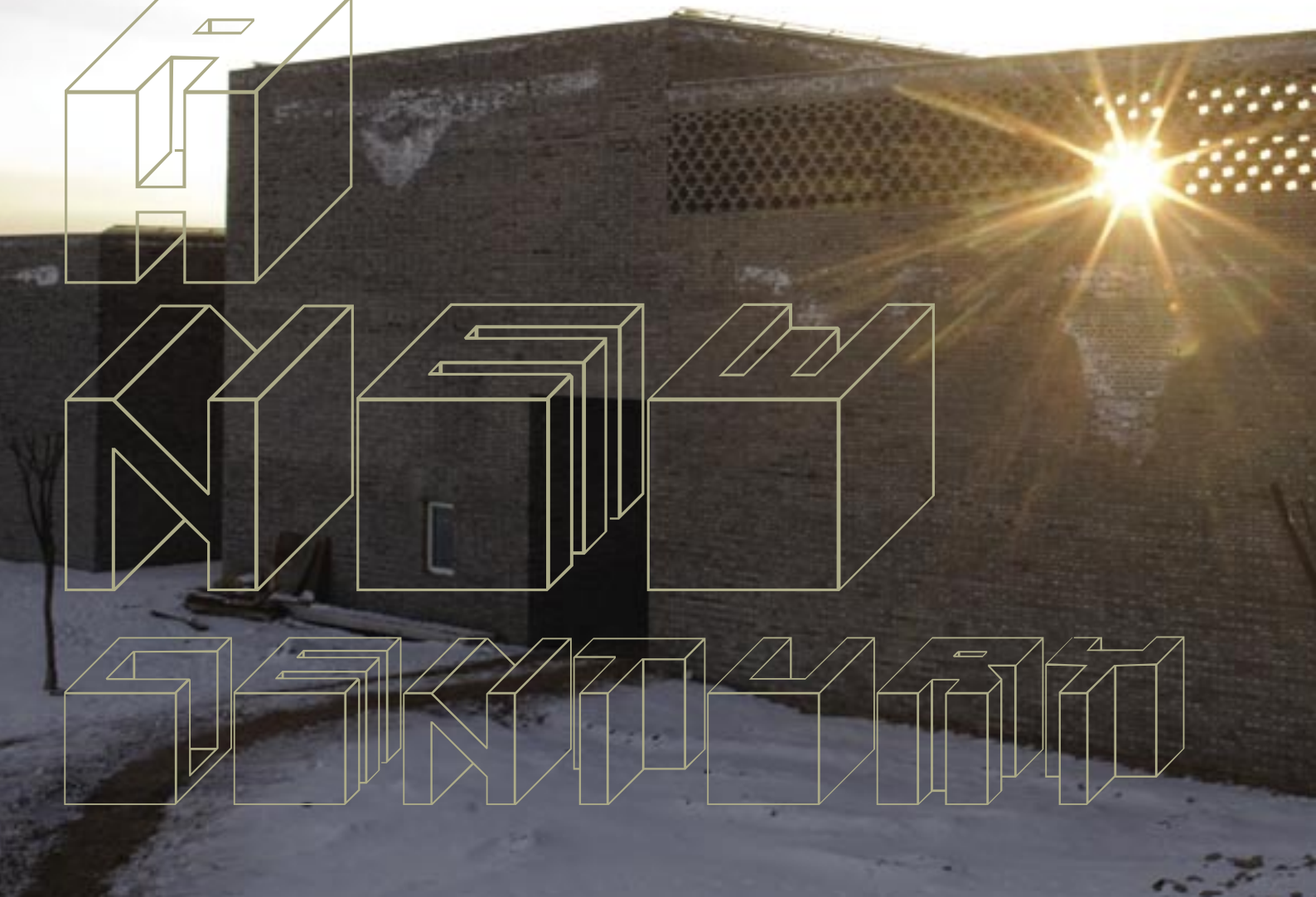
Two Asian designs: Above, resort villas for Birds Island in Malaysia; below, the Dalian Daily towers





This month, dozens of architects are making their way to the Inner Mongolian desert to lay the foundations for one of the world's most sensational architecture extravaganzas. *Alex Pasternack* reports on the facts and the figures

PHOTOS BY MAURICE WEISS



In 1226, on his way to rout the Western Xia regime, Genghis Khan is said to have picked his burial spot: the verdant grasslands near the modern city of Ordos, Inner Mongolia. On the same site today sits a mausoleum complex containing a wealth of Khanate memorabilia, ersatz Mongolian relics, and a vast fake ger, or traditional tent, where dinners of lamb come with a song-and-dance depiction of the warrior's life, performed mostly by Han Chinese. Notably absent however is Genghis Khan himself, who ordered that his body never be found.

"Wherever they died, they would be buried on site, without a tomb," says Cai Jiang, a leading local entrepreneur of Mongolian descent, as he flicks ash from his cigar. "We shouldn't have any trace at our death, because by then we have already spent so much time building our living spaces."

The 40-year-old billionaire from Baotou says he also intends to leave no trace, but that might be hard given his worldly ambitions. With a self-made fortune from milk and coal, and the backing of a government awash with natural resource earnings, Cai has launched a construction project that would surely impress Genghis, and make even the most ambitious Beijing developer blush: a river-ringed RMB 4.5 billion "creative culture" town made up of museums, theaters, studios, offices, apartments, and, at the center, a set of one hundred villas, each designed by a young international architect in about one hundred days.

"This does not happen often in the history of architecture or in China," Ordos's deputy mayor, Yang Gongyan, said in January at the opening meeting for the quasi-utopian project, called the Jiang Yuan Cultural Creative Industries Park. The unlikely meeting looked more like a UN summit than an urban planning consultation. Next to Cai sat assorted assistants, municipal planners, Party officials, and artist Ai Weiwei, who is working for Cai as master planner and organizer of the villa project, dubbed Ordos 100. Ai famously helped Swiss star architects Herzog & de Meuron design Beijing's Olympic stadium before slamming it as a state-sponsored "pretend smile."

Also present were 40 wide-eyed architects from 29 countries, who had been handpicked by Herzog & de Meuron, and flown in for the first phase of the project (another group arrives this month). "It's like a fairytale," said Alexia Leon, an architect from Lima, Peru, during a celebratory dinner. "China makes a lot of things real that seem unreal."

Before reaching the mostly empty steppe land where Cai's town will grow, half an hour by car from the current city center, visitors pass through the city's own new district. In less than three years, a 32-square-kilometer swath of grassland has been transformed into a super-suburb, replete with giant Genghis Khan statues, futuristic cultural buildings, a forest of new apartment complexes, and hundreds of faux classical villas that fade into the distance. In the past year, hundreds of kilometers of piping and road have been laid, and nearby, a new airport has opened, placing the city within an hour's reach of Beijing. »



Brick by brick: Ai Weiwei's artist studios at Ordos

This hyper speed approach to urbanization is a testament to the area's breakaway success. Inner Mongolia has become one of the literal engines for the country's economy; in 2007 its coal output rose an estimated 75 per cent to roughly 350 million tons, surpassing the old coal-mining base of Shanxi. And Ordos, which was until recently secluded from the outside world – it's bounded by mountain ranges and the Great Wall to the South and the Yellow River to the North – has opened for business. The city's GDP doubled between 2001 and 2004, largely because of its cows, coal, chemicals and cashmere (Ordos supplies a quarter of the world's cashmere). Foreign direct investment in Ordos is now the highest in the province. In the old district of Dongsheng, the parking lot of the five-star Holiday Inn hosts a revolving fleet of Range Rovers and Porsches. A Shangri-La hotel is under construction.

"Of course every city wants to be the best," says Vice Mayor Yang. For Ordos, that means reaching beyond its typical industries. To attract more investment, and diversify the city's economic profile, officials have not only turned Ordos into a manufacturing base for car, chemical, and advanced coal-to-fuel projects, but have also set their sights on China's emerging cultural industries. Taking a cue from Beijing and Shanghai, officials now see creativity, enshrined in everything from art districts to advertising agencies, as the medium to raise the city's profile, and inject the economy with a boost of innovation. In 2006, the Ordos government announced its intention to become Inner Mongolia's cultural industries leader, providing a base for film, music, web and fashion, and drawing in tourism from around China. "We want people to come here not just for business, but to relax, go shopping. We want to attract more creative talents, create a space where people can work, work creatively, and live comfortably."

To get there, officials are turning to entrepreneurs like Cai, who have the funds and the "flexibility" that governments do not, says Yang. And whereas the city's previous creative industry venture – the privately-funded Genghis Khan mausoleum – feels like a worn-out cultural theme park, Cai's Jiang Yuan town, what she calls "a world class architecture museum that's also a place to live and work," will, hopefully, "open the door to the world for Ordos."

Some locals have voiced opposition, citing the distance of the city's new district and the Jiang Yuan development from the old city, high costs of construction and ecological damage that a population boom

"Of course every city wants to be the best," says Vice Mayor Yang. That means not just coal and cows, but culture. "We want ... to attract more creative talents ... [The new town could] open the door to the world for Ordos"

could mean for an already fragile environment. "Ordos will become a hell on earth," wrote one critic in an Internet forum. Another commented: "It is impossible to have a few million more people, at best, on what is also a natural resource-based industrial city. Water supplies, the environment and other aspects do not create the conditions for a metropolis. And the distance between the two towns will only increase operating costs."

With his open collar, Hugo Boss suits, and suave goatee, Cai certainly looks the part of the ambitious private investor the government is banking on. He plays it well, too. "Because this is so costly, 4.5 billion *renminbi*, it's not rational or practical for the nation to invest in this kind of thing," he says. Though "one hundred" and "Ordos" have





Above: Face off - a conference on the project

Far right, Ai Weiwei, the organizer

Right: Developer Cai Jiang

Facing page: Architects gather for a group shot on the Jiang Yuan site during a January meeting



become almost mantras for him (“100 architects, 100 percent creativity, 100 percent everything!”), Cai says quality, not quantity is crucial. “If we only focus on the numbers, we won’t be earning enough.”

Soft spoken and circumspect, Cai is nonetheless “really, really good at pushing the boundaries of what’s possible in China,” says Michael Tunkey, an architect who is designing separate villas and an opera house for the Ordos site. When he accompanied Cai to a meeting with top executives from Harley Davidson last year, Cai, who owns half a dozen of the company’s motorcycles, proposed opening a Harley Davidson cafe in Ordos.

“These guys went from being very polite to showing real interest,” says Tunkey, who attended the meeting. “He had the ability to fly to Milwaukee and, without being able to speak the language, convince them that there’s this great thing happening and they might want to consider being involved. When most people get to his level of leader-

ship in China, they want to avoid things that will lose face. But when he believes in something, he doesn’t see why anyone would see differently.”

Despite a cool, brooding visage, Cai is gracious, and can be infectious enthusiastic. He is especially proud of the first buildings at Jiang Yuan: a set of utilitarian art studios by Ai Weiwei and a snaking glass-and-slate contemporary art museum designed by Beijing-based architect Xu Tiantian, which contains pieces from Cai’s own collection by artists like Xu Bing and Fang Lijun. Though he avoids discussing the occasionally touchy political subtexts in his collection, Cai says he admires the “freedom” of art, and hints, carefully, that it doesn’t have enough. “The arts nowadays need the best climate they can get here in China, be it purely artistically or commercially. This is something the United States already knows.”

For Cai, finding a space for creativity and building audiences around it means embracing the link between art and commerce. “As Inner »

Mongolia has become more economically mature, I started to think there's something missing in our cities, like a cultural life. Money alone doesn't make a city rich. And yet, this isn't just about a museum or even the other facilities, but an entire complex with a commercial bent, with advertisement firms, designers, cultural companies. I want to fill peoples' minds, but also their wallets."

When the new town begins to open late next year, Cai hopes to use it for his own companies, including ventures in engineering, natural gas, coal and – with a 50,000-cow ranch near Baotou – milk. Ordos, he hopes, will become the brand name for a series of projects. Though he currently sells his milk through provincial conglomerate Meng Niu Group, he plans to establish his own luxury milk and yogurt brand. By linking the city with his products, Cai imagines a synergy that could turn Ordos into a household word. "You can imagine after 50 or 100 years, people will be talking about this project. Whether my name is remembered is not so important. But the name of Ordos will spread."

The reason for that, Cai insists, is the architecture. "It's the most obvious cultural name card of a city," says Dai Xiaozhong, the vice director of the Jiang Yuan project. Last year, Cai made serious overtures to star architects like Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid and Herzog & de Meuron, but only the latter agreed to participate, selecting the 100 architects who would design the town's villas. That suited Cai perfectly. "We would like to support young artists, give them a stage and

a voice. Also, because the young architects are barely affected by tradition, they will have some new ideas to offer."

Even without big name recognition, and nary a design sketch, the project is already building buzz for its scale, speed, and collaborative style. "From the start, this should be a star project, because in our human history, nobody has done anything like it," says Ai Weiwei, who last year opened a pavilion park in his hometown of Jinhua, Zhejiang province, featuring the work of 17 architects. On one hand, the Ordos project is about "cultivating" a developer like Cai, "who has a slight idea about architecture." But Ai is more concerned with the architects. "Architects are so educated, so concerned about protecting their knowledge, so attached to personal creativity, rather than communicating or fighting or getting themselves into new circumstances, and using their basic, original strength, their courage. Whenever you set up a condition questioning normal behavior it's always interesting."


Ann-Sofi Rönnskog, a Finnish architect involved in the project, says that it offers an escape from the profession's culture of competition, which often results in wasted work and pitiful salaries. "Young architects always say there are not enough projects to do. This is the brilliant solution. Instead of competitions, collaboration!" Lyn Rice, who heads a practice in New York, says the commission provides not only "an incubator" for shared ideas but an opportunity to break out of the "McMansion" template of housing common

to large suburban construction in the West – and increasingly in China. "That is an opportunity that we simply do not have in our home countries."

Still, say architects and critics, many questions remain unanswered. Zou Huan, a professor of architecture at Tsinghua University in Beijing, wonders about the project's relevance to the larger context. "What I doubt a little is how a city could be created without a deep analysis of its social and economic aspects." Along with other concerns about how the villas will engage the public and each other, the architects also wonder if the entire area will end up fallow, like a larger version of Soho China's much-hyped Commune by the Great Wall, a project that only saw success when hotel group Kempinski was brought in to manage the property. Cai rejects those ideas, but says the uncertainties are precisely why he convened the architects in the first place.

"I'm always looking for more talented ideas, more creative ideas to develop this concept," he says. "That's what makes this special. We need new ideas, right? Because nobody has done such a project before." **U**

Urbane reported on Cai's grand plans in our January cover story (download the PDF from www.urbanechina.com). Look for more coverage of the Ordos project in the months to come.



Says an architect from New York: "This is an opportunity that we simply do not have in our home countries"

Genghis Khan presides over the center of Ordos's new district

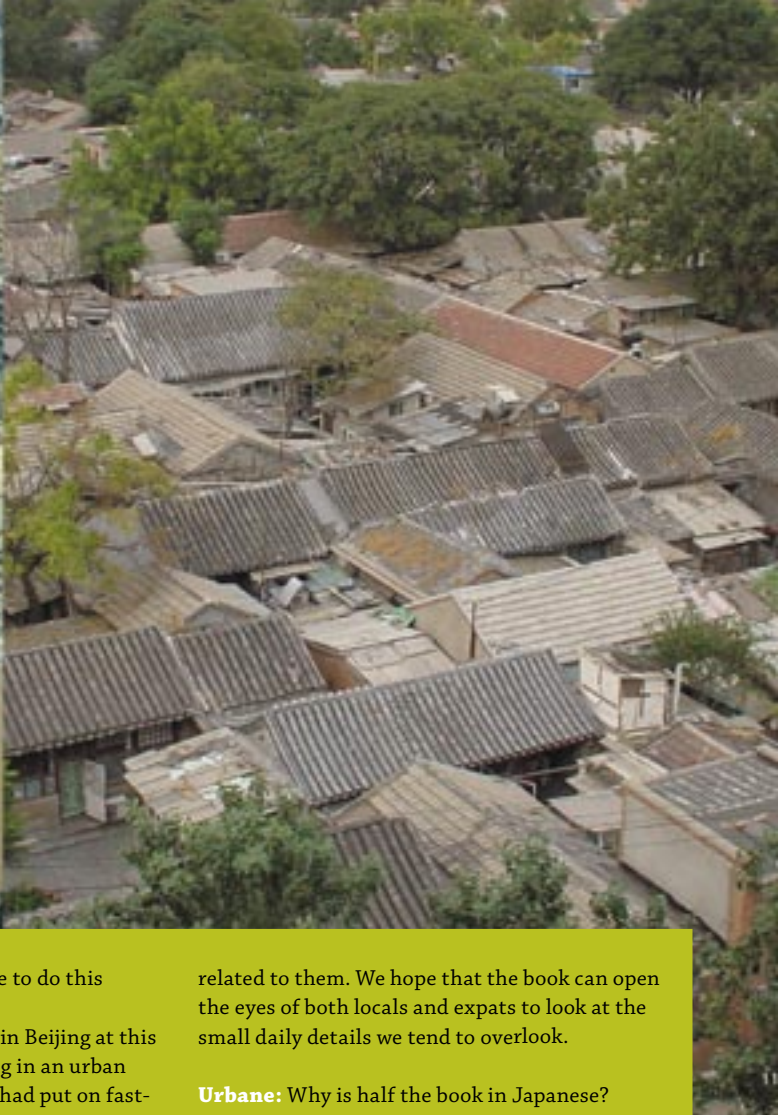
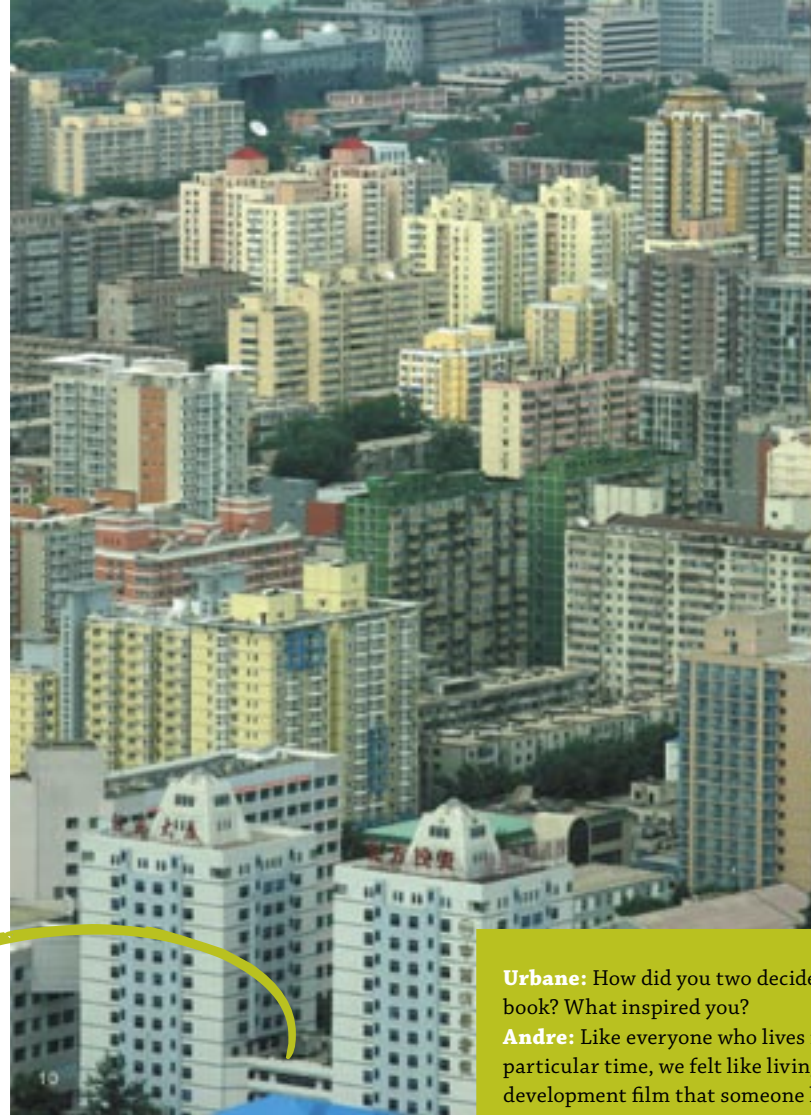


Two young foreign architects turn their cameras and their ideas to the big city they're helping to remake

INTERVIEW BY ALEX PASTERNAK

After moving to Beijing in 2004 to work on the CCTV building for the Office of Metropolitan Architecture, architects Andre Schmidt and Hiromasa Shirai decided to capture on film the fleeting moments of Beijing's head-spinning change. In *Big Bang Beijing*, released last month in English and Japanese, they bring together their amateur snapshots of the capital's everyday spaces, with text from notable observers such as Keru Feng, Rem Koolhaas, and Barbara Munch. The result is a unique photographic record of Beijing's pre-Olympics evolution. **U**





Urbane: How did you two decide to do this book? What inspired you?

Andre: Like everyone who lives in Beijing at this particular time, we felt like living in an urban development film that someone had put on fast-forward. Our intention was to press pause, look at the still image and simply document Beijing's current everyday life in an urban snapshot.

Urbane: Why *Big Bang Beijing*?

A: Big Bang describes the theory of how the universe expanded rapidly from one central point, and is continually expanding. Beijing's urban form reminds us of such an expansion, coming from one nucleus, formerly the Forbidden City, later extended, or replaced, by Tiananmen Square and the new centers of power. The ever-expanding ring roads can be seen as the shock waves of urban growth around Beijing.

Urbane: Your book is part picture and coffee table book, part encyclopedia and typology. How are you hoping people might read it?

A: The book should be perceived as an urban snapshot, attempting to freeze the moment of change we are experiencing right now before the Olympics. The book does not have to be read from beginning to end; rather, one should flip through the images and then read the essays

related to them. We hope that the book can open the eyes of both locals and expats to look at the small daily details we tend to overlook.

Urbane: Why is half the book in Japanese?

Hiromasa: There is a lot of literature on China already, particularly on its politics and economics, yet there are very few books that address what is actually going on here, especially in Beijing. We believe that this is something Japanese people would like to know about and that we should discuss. Another important medium of this book is that Beijing's current urban transformation reminds one of urban changes in Tokyo in the 1960s. Running up to the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, the city was improved in many aspects, while at the same time [losing] many things. Looking at present-day Beijing offers Japanese people an opportunity to look back at the legacy of the Olympics, what Tokyo achieved and lost.

Urbane: Hiro, how would you compare the Beijing architectural community to that of Tokyo?

H: I think that the big difference between the two is the openness to outsiders. Since there is a lot of construction in Beijing, there are opportunities for foreigners to come and share the same construction experience. And I feel that »



Beijing's current urban transformation reminds one of urban changes in Tokyo in the 1960s. Running up to the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, the city was improved in many aspects, while at the same time [losing] many things



a Chinese architect also would like to talk with outsiders and get something from them. However, in Tokyo, a lack of construction projects leads to a dominance of the Japanese architects and they seem to be working on projects in a very specific way. In this way, the architectural community in Tokyo seems to be more institutionalized.

I also see the similarity between the two communities in the way both of them are now highly interested in connecting to various types of media. This tendency makes architects become fashionable figures. How to express themselves in [the] media seems to become equally important as their architectural works. Today, in order to survive, architects in both communities need to design not only their buildings, but also themselves.

Urbane: What does it mean to observe today's urban China from a foreign perspective?

A: The typical answer to this may be that foreigners are able to see the conditions from a fresh and different point of view. Urban

phenomena are vast, and it is difficult to understand them when you live inside the city. One thing a foreigner can contribute is to give an analytical framework for looking at the history of the metropolis. Therefore, we chose 13 chapters related to the urban exterior of Beijing that reflect our own view in observing Beijing.

Urbane: Does your book encourage activism? Or the belief that it is best to maintain a distance?

A: We see this book as an observation. Over time, phenomena disappear. For example, the large, excessive billboards that used to advertise high-end real estate have largely been removed. So we are happy to see that our intention to preserve these special moments of contrast and change does work. Even before its release, our work has already become a history book.

Big Bang Beijing is available from Timezone 8 bookshop (www.timezone8.com) and www.amazon.com