

Shanghai, China  
ongoing in 2021

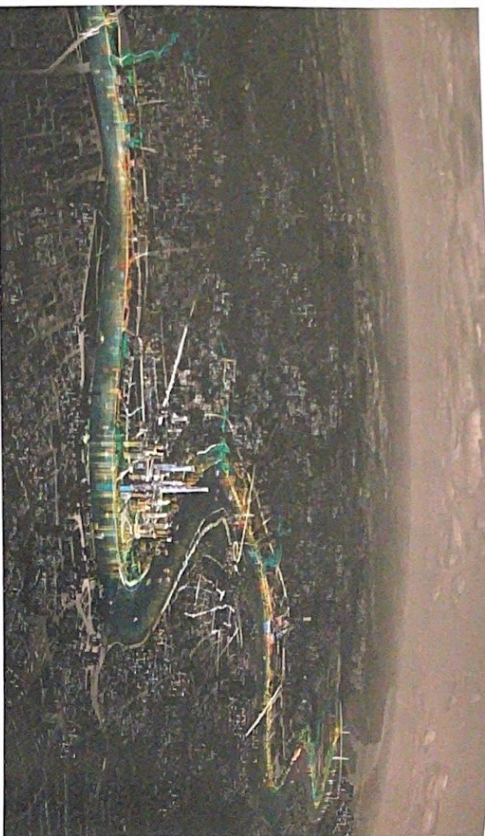
Cement Factory Park, Agence Ter

Coal House Modern Art Museum Park, YVU Design and Atelier Deshaus

Shanghai Shipyard Riverside Park, Design Land Collaborative

Xinhua Waterfront Park, West 8

Mingheng Wharf Waterfront Park, Atelier Liu Yansong Architects and Atelier Deshaus



Pudong waterfront, aerial rendering of master plan, Agence Ter

According to the French landscape firm Agence Ter, the master plan for the east (Pudong) riverside in Shanghai is expected by the government to brand the metropolis as a Green City. More than thirteen miles of waterfront were divided into eighteen parcels for public/private development; half of this territory is owned by four companies, which are allowed to use only 2 percent of their lots for low-rise buildings. Some of the owners were permitted to engage the landscape architect of their choice, opting for American, Dutch, and Chinese firms; others followed the government's lead in choosing Agence Ter. The city government called for clearly marked tripart circulation for the greenways on both sides of the river. In Pudong, the planners determined the widths of a pedestrian "discovery" path, a red jogging path, and a gray asphalt bicycle path (occasionally elevated). Vegetation along the river was to be kept low to allow views of the waterway and its reflection of light; denser vegetation along the city side was to provide shade and fresh air. Restaurants regularly punctuate this side.

Alex and I started our exploration of the newly completed parks in Pudong at the south end of the string. The landscape architects met us at each site. As we drove to the first green space, gradients from urban to rural provided a shocking contrast. The dense urban form of Shanghai's city center gave way to the odd agricultural field on the outskirts of the city. This pastoral setting is under threat, however, as housing developments and shopping centers consume the landscape, a result of Shanghai's explosive growth. Within these new developments, only the occasional nondescript, partially demolished, two- or three-story concrete buildings provide a flashback to the relatively recent times when Pudong was known for rural farming rather than for its current dizzying skyline.

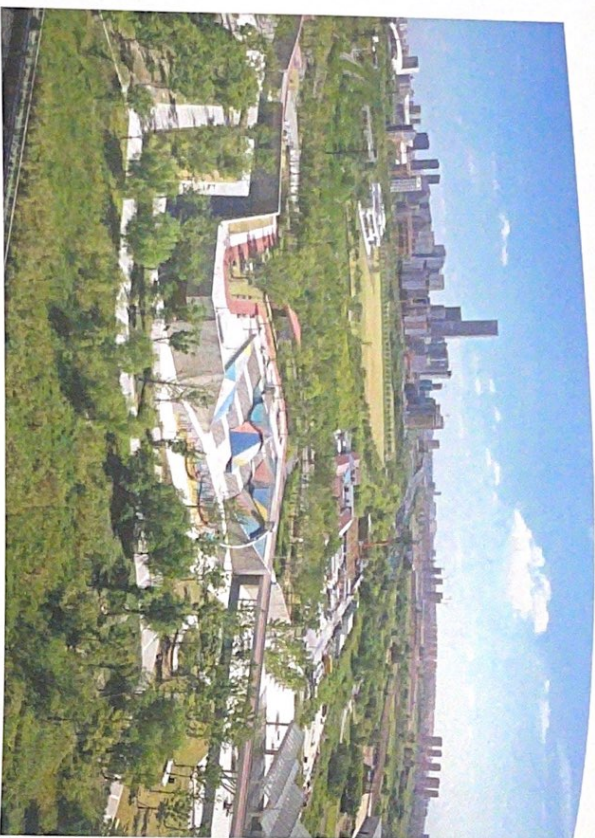
Qiantan District, which included the southernmost part of the completed riverside renewal, once consisted of small villages and a large cement factory. In 2018, Agence Ter converted the site into **Cement Factory Park** (2018, 30 acres, cost: undisclosed). The landscape design includes many new structures, notably elegant glazed "totems" every kilometer (required by the government, the totems, which continue along the river, contain comfort stations and an open space for reading and relaxation) and the Starry Night Pavilion. According to Emmanuelle Blondeau, Agence Ter's project manager, the large-scale impression of this park may have been inspired by the outside design characteristic of the Danish firm Bjarke

Of the many challenges the design team faced, the multi-lane vehicular tunnel running directly underneath the park proved to be one the biggest. Because of limitations related to building on top of this structure, the designers decided to create a broad lawn and plaza. Flanking the plaza—not over the tunnel—are two large forms (the designers call them "hills") built primarily of reinforced concrete. Inside are various programs, including a restaurant and park user facilities; outside are faceted exteriors painted in joyful colors as well as play space and a large amphitheater. The bicycle path that runs adjacent to the river—part of Agence Ter's master plan—is predominantly flat except where it ramps up the hills to provide a lookout over the park and river.

The expansive size of Cement Factory Park is in part a response to its intended use as a concert venue. The amphitheater and lawn provide ample space for festivals and massive gatherings. Yet elegant details emerge within these vast spaces, such as the long bench snaking through groves of oak and ash trees or the whimsical, reed-like lights within the meadow.

Alternating between walking and brief stints of driving, we passed the stretch of waterfront containing Turenne's Houan Park and Agence Ter's Square of the Ferris to arrive at the **Coal House Modern Art Museum Park** (2018, 19.7 acres, cost: undisclosed) by Atelier Deshaus and YVU Design. The park, like the renovated Lujiazui Waterfront Park by Agence





Cement Factory Park, playground, Agence Ter  
Reed-like lights

Coal House Modern Art Museum Park,  
Atelier Deshaus and YJU Design



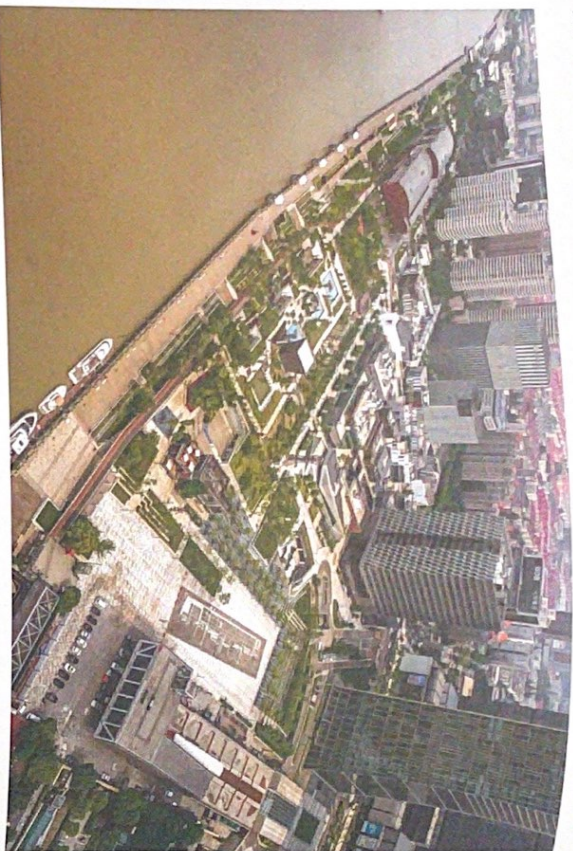
Ter, is at the heart of Pudong's financial district and faces Shanghai's historic Bund. The architects and landscape architects have adapted the remnants of an old coal works for the museum, cafés, and restaurants along the river. Entry to the complex is achieved by ascending a fanciful elevated zigzag path, built in steel and recalling the walkway in Huangpu Lake Park (page 354). The designers were able to retain some of the existing trees along with the coal works and have surrounded the buildings with small gardens containing perennial grasses and swaths of white cornflower.

Farther north along the Huangpu's curve to the east was an especially interesting renewal. When he started work on the **Shanghai Shipyard Riverside Park** (2019, 30 acres, cost: \$40.2 million), Dwight Law of the firm Design Land Collaborative was disappointed by the amount of advance preparation that had already been implemented by the local authorities. The existing flood wall prevented creation of the natural riverside that had been envisaged, and remediation had left a soil depth that was insufficient for the vegetation that had been planned. Yet Law deftly overcame these impediments.

The park offers multilevel lawns and amphitheatres terraced in a way that both accommodates seasonal floods and supports outdoor cultural festivities. Pedestrian bridges and ramps connect the cascading gardens with the linear paths specified in the master plan. A broad riverside path bordered by benches and boulders of green Hangzhou slate is a natural, hard presence within the soft landscape. We were captivated by the inviting human scale of this park. On the day of our visit, seductively rich plantings of scarlet Japanese blood grass (*Imperata cylindrica* 'Rubra'), covered undulating hills. Chinese tallow trees (*Sapium sebiferum*) and mully grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) overtopped other mounds.

The Shipyard Riverside Park provides a magnificent setting for two elegant cultural buildings. One is a substantial red-brick former ship manufactory (1972) that was skillfully renovated by the Japanese architect Kenjo Kuma into an international music hall and retail space; its restaurant and café overlook the river. The other is the Lujiuzai Exhibition Center, part of which was designed by the Dutch firm oma. The enclosed exhibition space functions as an urban theater, hovering over an outdoor area used for smaller events. The multiple





cultural facilities are more than most of the riverside parks can boast, although almost all have at least one (especially in Puxi, where they are installed in renovated industrial buildings).

In addition to the exhibition center, which sits on the ramp of a former ship cradle, where newly constructed vessels were shipped into the river, Design Land Collaborative created a space intended for festivals, Christmas markets, and other large-scale gatherings. The area is sheltered by grids of Chinese sashberry trees (*Sapindus mukerous*) and camphor trees (*Cinnamomum camphora*) and serves as a food and beverage market. The east side of the plaza is bounded by a terrace paved in blue tile; a beautifully designed, wave-like pattern references the river. In the center of the plaza is a large reflecting pool with dancing fountains and mist. The water feature, which can be emptied to accommodate certain activities, displays a sectional representation of a ship, harking back to the site's history.

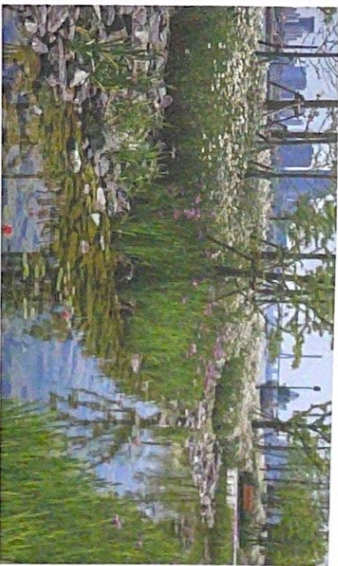
The entire Shipyard Riverside Park consists of two terraces, upper and lower, to mitigate occasional flooding; the terraces are connected by a zone of gardens on sloped terrain. At the lower level is a water retention area, or rain garden; a constructed, interactive wetland 104 feet wide that collects and cleans storm water runoff. The large stones strewn throughout the pond and a border of trines and bold cypresses (*Lawsonia distichum*) provide a note of the natural in this orderly landscape.

Contrasting with the human scale of the Shipyard Riverside Park is West 8's *Xinhua Waterfront Park* (2018, 42 acres, cost undisclosed). Here, West 8's requirement to

keep the nearly hundred-foot-wide former dock has resulted in a park that blends an industrial aesthetic with a civic scale. Like the Shipyard Riverside Park, Xinhua Park is terraced to respond to flooding. The lower terrace occupies the zone of the former dock, and the upper terrace presents a woodland and rock garden. Along the lower terrace, ornamental annulus and trees in planters are the only vegetation on many of the broad swaths of granite-cobblestoned patterned paving. Robust metal structures along the waterfront provide shade to those wanting to stand along the railing and contemplate the river. Yet while the expanses are stark, and in warm weather unmercifully hot, they provide generous spaces for large occasions: festivals, food truck gatherings, and markets. Xinhua Waterfront Park is one of the few of the various riverfront parks capable of accommodating such activities.

An undulating retaining wall running the length of the park provides bench seating along the lower terrace. To shelter this bench, West 8 subtly tempered the ard quality of the open space by using bamboo formwork for the cast concrete that arcs overhead to create shade. This allusion to natural plant matter highlights the artifice of the protected bench and at the same time provides a sense of place and materiality.

The broad ribbon of paving on the lower level is contrasted by the dense plantings on the upper level, comprising 2,254 trees between rocky outcroppings and narrow paths. Generously scattered among the planting beds, the stones suggest a mountainous landscape. The rough-hewn, warm-colored stones selected by West 8 are repeated in the children's playground. The play area is shaped like a turtle—an animal that in China



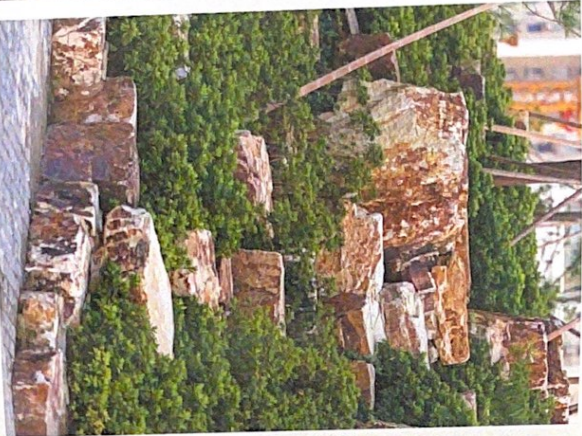
Shanghai Shipyard Riverside Park, Design Land Collaborative

Many grass and amphitheater with international music hall and retail space beyond. Kenjo Kuma

Rain garden

Ship Cradle Event Plaza and reflecting pool





symbolizes longevity. The shell, a domed structure with stairs and paths, allows children to run through a miniature forest of pine and flowering shrubs.

Xinhu Waterfront Park, although sophisticated in its materiality, was not without its challenges. Adrian Geuze, the principal of West 8, calls it a "moving target." He bemoaned the extremely tight time limits, saying, "Something that would take five years elsewhere is expected to take a week in China."

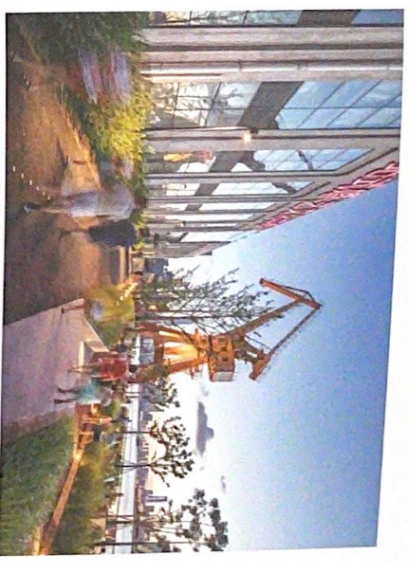
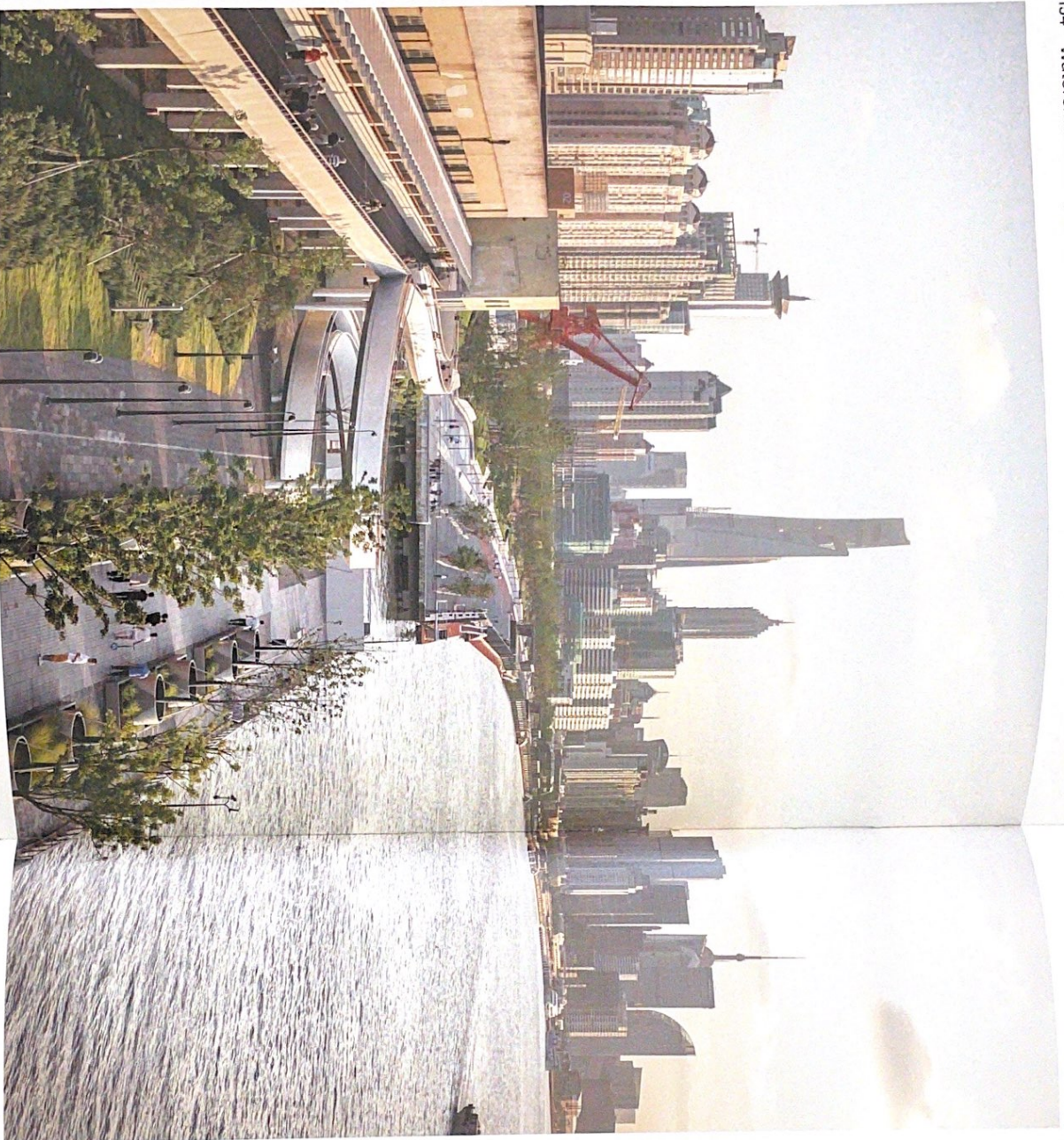
We met Yuyang Liu and Yifeng Guo of Atelier Liu Yuyang Architects at their **Minsheng Wharf Waterfront Park** (2018, 6.7 acres, cost: undisclosed), the next landscape to the northeast. This park occupies a very thin sliver of space between the river and former warehouse structures that have been reprogrammed for various uses, including huge grain silos that have been transformed into an exhibition hall by the local firm Atelier Deshaus. Consisting primarily of a riverfront promenade and raised walkways, the park serves as a ferry stop, welcoming commuters and inviting them to pause underneath the curvilinear metal mesh roofs of its pavilions.

Most intriguing is the gracefully spiraling metal grate walkway that contains three levels: high (bikes), middle (joggers), and low (pedestrian) paths in accordance with the three-part circulation of the master plan. Liu and Guo told us that the small plaza where the walkway meets the ground level is a favorite dance spot for older people, who bring their own music-making devices. This plaza is one of the few places in Minsheng Park to offer vegetation. One reason for this is that the designers did not receive permission to alter the existing pier to plant trees, so vegetation is grown in modular metal planters. The silvery containers, chosen to convey the idea of technology, align in equidistant rows to provide seating, but they do little to relieve the dry quality of this expansive concrete platform.

We eventually crossed the river, leaving Pudong and heading to Puxi. Daily commuter ferries leave every fifteen minutes or so from the many Pudong terminals, and it takes another five minutes to reach the opposite shore. In contrast to the luxurious yachts moored in marinas along the Huangpu and the sight-seeing boats regularly plying its waters, the ferry we took with Liu and Guo was a modest conveyance, filled with male motorcyclists. We landed at the Shanghai Power Station Auxiliary Machine Factory, also designed by Yuyang Liu following a master plan for Yangpu District by

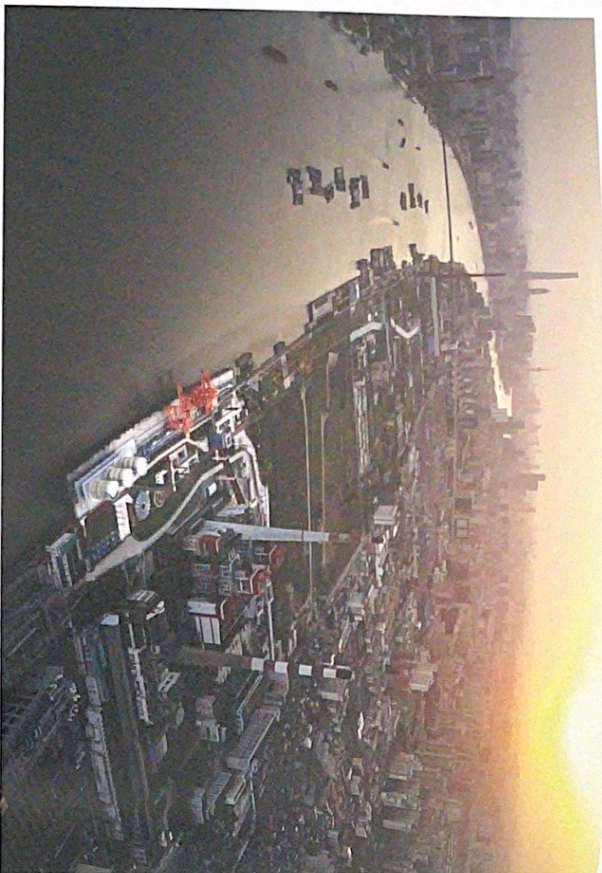
Original Design Studio on the Puxi waterfront. Liu's parks on either side of the river preserve towering industrial equipment no longer in use, notably the bright orange tower cranes that line the two shores. The preservation of the sites' industrial legacy was something that had been largely lost on the Pudong side of the river, though we soon found that it defined the Puxi side.





Musheng Wharf Waterfront Park,  
sprawling, multi-level cyclists, joggers,  
and pedestrians walkway,  
Aster Liu Yiyang Architects  
Riverfront walkway with cranes





View to southwest over Huangpu River and Puxi waterfront with Yangshupu Power Plant Park (foreground)

## Riverside Parks, Puxi (West)

Shanghai, China  
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Waterworks Park/Fisherman's Wharf, Original Design Studio

Yangpu Riverfront, da landscape

Yangshupu Power Plant Park, Original Design Studio

Referred to as the “cradle of China’s modern industry,” the 9.6-mile west shoreline of the Huangpu River hosted a series of firsts in China: water treatment, textiles, shipbuilding, and thermal power. The creation of what would become the Yangshupu Industrial Zone began in 1869, when the Shanghai Concession Project Bureau constructed the Yangshupu Road as a means to connect the Bund with the port of the same name. Following the 1842 Sino-British Treaty of Nanking, foreign industrialists gained the right to manufacture in Shanghai, and a flourishing industrial economy developed rapidly along the west bank of the Huangpu River. In 1913, British investors built the Yangshupu Power Plant, at one point the largest producer of electricity in East Asia and the tallest structure in Shanghai. It closed officially in 2010.

By the 1990s, however, the industrial landscape on this bank of the river was a ghost of its former self. Eighty-three percent of the area’s industry had relocated, leaving behind a row of contaminated sites that obstructed public access to the river, and the number of workers had dropped from 600,000 to 60,000.

The rehabilitation project extends on the Puxi side of the river from Yangpu Bridge to the northern extremity of Yangpu District, an area as noteworthy for its history of intense industrialization from the late 1800s to the 1930s as for its magnificent views of the river and the Pudong skyline.

When Original Design Studio was awarded the master plan for the Puxi side of the Huangpu through a competition in 2015, the aim was to “return the river to the people.” Sophisticated contemporary urban planning strategies, which layer park systems, transportation networks, and residential, commercial, and cultural uses, were pressed into service to replace the single-function industrial corridor. The government remediated the former factories for cultural activities, and the landscape architects retained numerous industrial artifacts to allude to the neighborhood’s identity.

Alex and I started our tour of the riverside parks in Puxi at the southernmost open area, just as we had in Pudong. At the paired **Waterworks Park/Fisherman’s Wharf** (2016–18, 9.4 acres, cost: undisclosed), we were surprised to see Victorian neo-Gothic architecture beside the walkway—two building facades and a crenelated wall. The attractive red brick structures (1883) were built by the British during their occupation of Shanghai and still belong to the city’s waterworks department. The colonial remains are rare survivors, given the many

traditional Chinese buildings that have been demolished throughout the country.

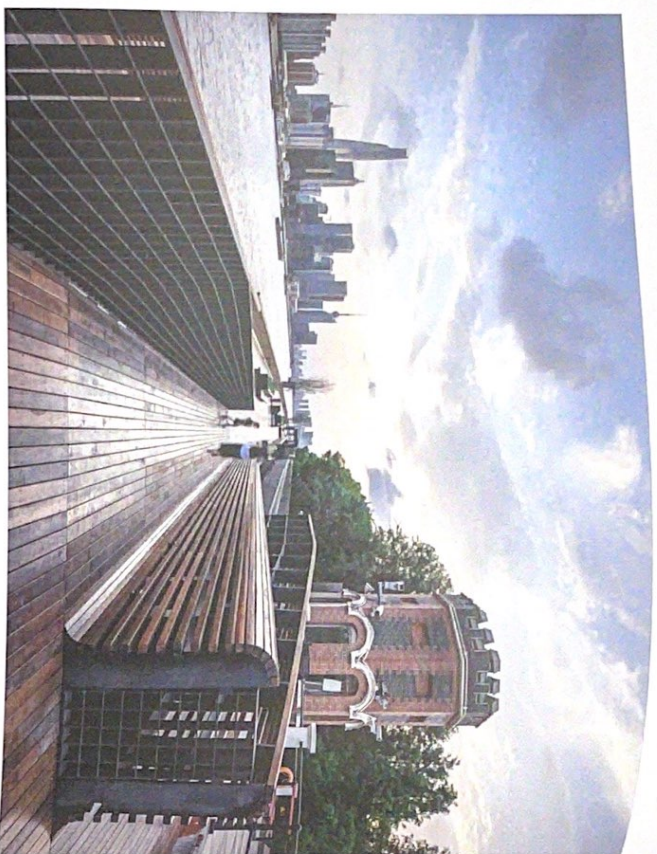
It was this historic architecture, however, that presented the biggest challenge for the designer, Original Design Studio, in the Waterworks Park area. The master plan called for a continuous system of parks linked by paths, but the waterworks and its crenelated perimeter wall extended all the way to the water’s edge. To solve this problem, the landscape architects repurposed an abandoned pier in front of the wall, creating a boardwalk over the water. The single boardwalk in the waterside park system, it is 1,755 feet long and varies in width from thirteen to almost forty-three feet.

Waterworks is the only park we visited that physically extends into the Huangpu, and the numerous tugboats and barges gave us an immediate sense of being on the river. This is also one of the few parks where industrial activity still occurs. Ships dock next to the boardwalk and unload materials such as liquid aluminum through large pipes underneath the decking and into the waterworks facility.

Large canopy trees inside the city waterworks complex arc over the walls, lending a richness to the public walkway. On the boardwalk itself, vegetation is limited to planters. The wide curved edges of the meibau wood balustrade, which matches the walkway, and the careful detailing of the shaded seating pavilions along the length of the boardwalk are of typically high quality.

The Fisherman’s Wharf portion offers a variety of experiences: river, with heavy boat traffic and lapping water on metal grate bridges, and wetland, which takes advantage of a pit left over from the site’s previous occupant, a fish market. Connecting these two is an urban garden with beds of perennial grasses;





Waterworks Park with Victorian architecture,  
Original Design Studio

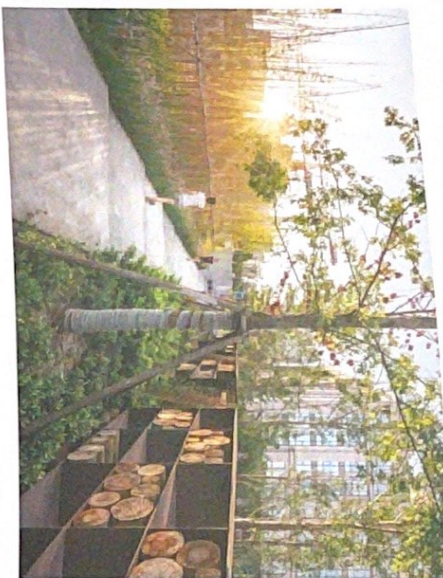
Waterside metal wood boardwalk



Fisherman's Wharf, riverside seating, Original  
Design Studio

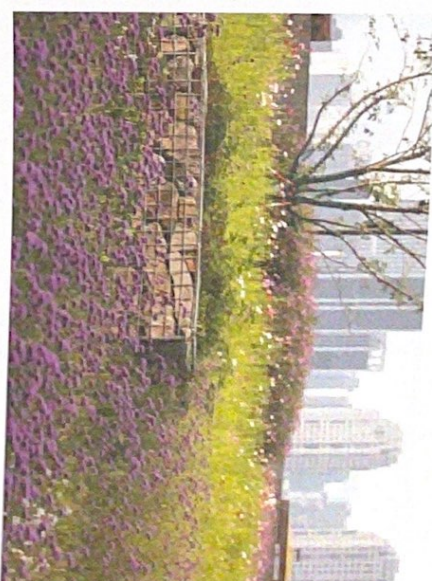
Wetland, walkway, and preexisting structures





Yangpu Riverfront (Timber Market), steel walls with logs, da landscape  
Plan  
Terraced gardens and seating

Auxiliary Plant East, gabion walls on footprints of former industrial buildings, Atelier Liu Voyang Architects, Atelier 2+, and Atelier Deshaus



seating areas provide a place for visitors to pause and watch the river traffic.

The paths through the park are equally diverse. Narrow footpaths and raised walkways over the wetland encourage visitors to meander. Wider paths paved in granite run through the center of the park, connecting it to various city spaces. Broad expanses of concrete adjacent to the river, formerly docks, allow for cyclists and rollerbladers to zip by. The formal tripartite circulation scheme of Pudong is relaxed in Puxi; designers have freedom to design paths that respond to site conditions.

In addition to the fish market, a British cotton mill once occupied the one-third-mile tract along the river, and the landscape architects embedded the history of the cotton mill in the wetland decking structure and in pavilions that look like looms, a nod to the weaving process. Statues of weavers and fishermen are less successful in this respect. Imagery showing the history of the site continues along the river; the designers have also added a narrow-gauge rail line in the concrete surface of the dock that rolls wide steel planters on wheels along it.

The generous stretch of planting between the Fisherman's Wharf pier and the wetland provides the park with its primary gathering space. Standing before a screen of gingko trees were vibrantly colored purple coneflowers, in bloom at the time of our visit, alternating with tall, swaying grasses and tidy lawns. Original Design Studio calls Waterworks Park, Fisherman's Wharf a "demonstration section" for the riverside public space in Yangpu. The two parks are similar in character, richer and more distinctive than many of the parks on the Pudong riverfront, and the attention to detail is pronounced.

To the north of the duo is **Yangpu Riverfront** (2013-18, 16.6 acres, cost: undisclosed), designed by da landscape. Also known as the Timber Market, the park stands on a location that was a lumber company and, later, a ship salvage yard; large cranes and a ramped ship launch remain from the latter. The charming large green space, built partially on piers and partially on land that terraces upward, links to smaller parks

that extend into the adjacent neighborhood. Newly built walls of weathered steel plates filled with precisely cut logs provide a rhythm to the site and also mark the property boundaries of the former industrial structures.

A small stream divides the site, nearby, along the waterfront promenade, is an interactive map of the neighborhood. Carved into the concrete paving is a shallow channel that represents the stream; park goers can fill the channel with a pump. The map indicates roads and bridges with bands of metal. An outdoor classroom composed of tiers of stepped seating and desks, each tier separated by planters full of flowering perennials, provides additional space for outdoor learning.

Within the park's amphitheater, benches in precast concrete display important dates in the history of the lumber company. The ends of the benches are stamped in a wood pattern, a use of natural materials as imagery similar to what we observed at Xinhua Waterfront Park. The concrete (produced by a German company) is smooth, well formed, and without stress fractures; such quality construction is a rarity in China.

Several parks under construction in 2019 occupy strips of riverfront adjoining Timber Market. Large, repurposed, early twentieth-century warehouses will be retained in some of the parks, including the Auxiliary Plant East Park by Atelier 2+, Atelier Liu Voyang Architects, and Atelier Deshaus.

Finally, to the northeast of these sites is the most recently completed park on the Puxi side of the river, the **Yangshupu Power Plant Park** (2019, 4.3 acres, cost: undisclosed), created by Original Design Studio. Like many of the other parks along the Huangpu, this one occupies a site significant in China's rapid rise as an industrialized nation. To preserve this legacy of the site, Original Design Studio repurposed relics when possible, repaired the native landscapes, and connected the public with the river.

The park was scheduled to open the day after our visit, but cooperative guards granted us access. Our initial impression was of an otherworldly landscape consumed by the relics of an



industrial past: the foundations of a coal transportation trestle, pumps, wet and dry ash storage tanks, a coal hopper, conveyor belts, water storage tanks, and three massive tower cranes. China typically removes all traces of a site's former life, but in this case the designers were able to save them. The enormous size and quantity of remains outdid anything we had seen until then. But it was the power station itself, with its soaring chimney, that dominated the scene. At 345 feet tall, the chimney, once a symbolic gateway to Shanghai's port, now stands as a terminus for the Yangpu Riverfront park system.

The primary open space is an industrial square defined by three stepped retention pools planted with reeds and grasses. The pools occupy the sites of two demolished buildings. Each contains a unique relic fragment: rectangular concrete piles piercing the surface of the water, foundation walls that frame three pavilions (one whose roof was formerly a coal hopper), and two large pumps set into a crushed stone terrace also containing waterlilies. Walls made from weathered steel sheet piling surround the ponds, and a restroom pavilion is partially buried underneath excavated fill.

Defining the river's edge are the three red tower cranes, as well as a 656-foot-long coal transportation trestle, converted by Original Design Studio into a lookout over the river. On the trestle, decorated by a long, linear planter filled with changing flower displays and accessible by a bridge, was the only place where we experienced the life of the busy shipping corridor.

One of the many singular aspects of this park is the articulation of the flood wall. In almost every riverfront park we visited in Shanghai, the designers raised the ground level to meet the top of the floodwall. In the Power Plant Park, Original Design Studio maintained the original grade as much as possible, exposing the wall. While this configuration obstructs views to the river, what is gained is a sense of occupying an industrial sunken garden.

Industrial structures have been repurposed as a museum, gallery spaces, information kiosks, cafes, and even a climbing facility. These pavilions might be difficult for those with limited mobility or acrophobia, because access is typically gained via long, narrow staircases that pierce or spiral around the skin of the structures to cantilever high over the park. The reward for reaching one of the many lookout spots is a panoramic view of not only this park but much of the Yangpu park system.

The tripartite circulation of the other riverfront parks is in evidence here, winding around rectangular planting beds and grassy areas as it leads from the park's entrance to the



looming power station. The various paths in this area of industrial behemoths are like nothing so much as the Yellow Brick Road in the Land of Oz.

As we exited the park, we walked along a raised steel walkway through a grove of Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum* Thunb.). To our left were old concrete walls articulated with lace-like grilles, the remains of smaller industrial structures, to our right, decrepit machinery, the monumental remains of industry. It struck us that Original Design Studio's intended goal—restoration of a lost riparian ecology—may have disappointed, but it succeeded instead in creating an industrial *peijing* (mini-replication of a large landscape) within a vast sculpture park.



Industrial square with park pavilions

Industrial structure repurposed as information center/connection hub

Overleaf: Industrial *peijing*

Yangpu Power Plant Park, retention pools with

relics, Original Design Studio

Tower cranes as follies