

Jia Little Exhibition Center

About SKEW Collaborative:

SKEW Collaborative is an architecture and research practice that started in 1999 in the city of New York, and currently based in Shanghai and Hong Kong. Facing the need to reconcile these triangulated geographies, the cultural disparities between the cities became the raw material that feeds the studio's work. Through an analysis of culture and the city, SKEW seeks to create architecture that is elegant and relevant, but more critically, architecture that can increase awareness about our cities and natural environment. In every project, SKEW will examine architectural artifacts produced by different cultures in order to design architectural strategies that can bridge, critique and translate between cultures and systems.

Through various professional, research and academic platforms, the design principals of SKEW are committed to an inventive and culturally sensitive design practice. The design principals are currently teaching at the University of Hong Kong in Shanghai and Hong Kong. They have also taught at Columbia, Yale, Princeton Universities, NYU and Pratt Institute. SKEW's work has been featured at acclaimed design events and forums such as the 2004 Venice Biennale, 2004 Singapore Art Festival, 2004 SENI Contemporary Art Exhibition, 2005 ERA05 Copenhagen World Design Congress, 2005 Harvard Asia GSD Tsunami Design Conference, 2007 & 2009 Shenzhen Biennale, 2008 Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo's YOUprison Exhibition, 2010 Beijing Architecture Biennale, 2011 Chengdu Biennale, and 2011 Singapore Hub-to-Hub Public Art Exhibition.

The Architectures of Sustainability

Jia Little Exhibition Center addressed two central issues – that of architectural building practices, as well as the rise of global industrial complex, and the inevitable result of the increased separation of producer, product and consumer. Both issues have ramifications on sustainability – the former translates directly to a building's constructional and operational carbon footprint, while the latter precipitates in an alienated state where consumer goods necessitate massive amounts of energy to be created and delivered to the user.

Name of Project: *Jia Little Exhibition Centre*

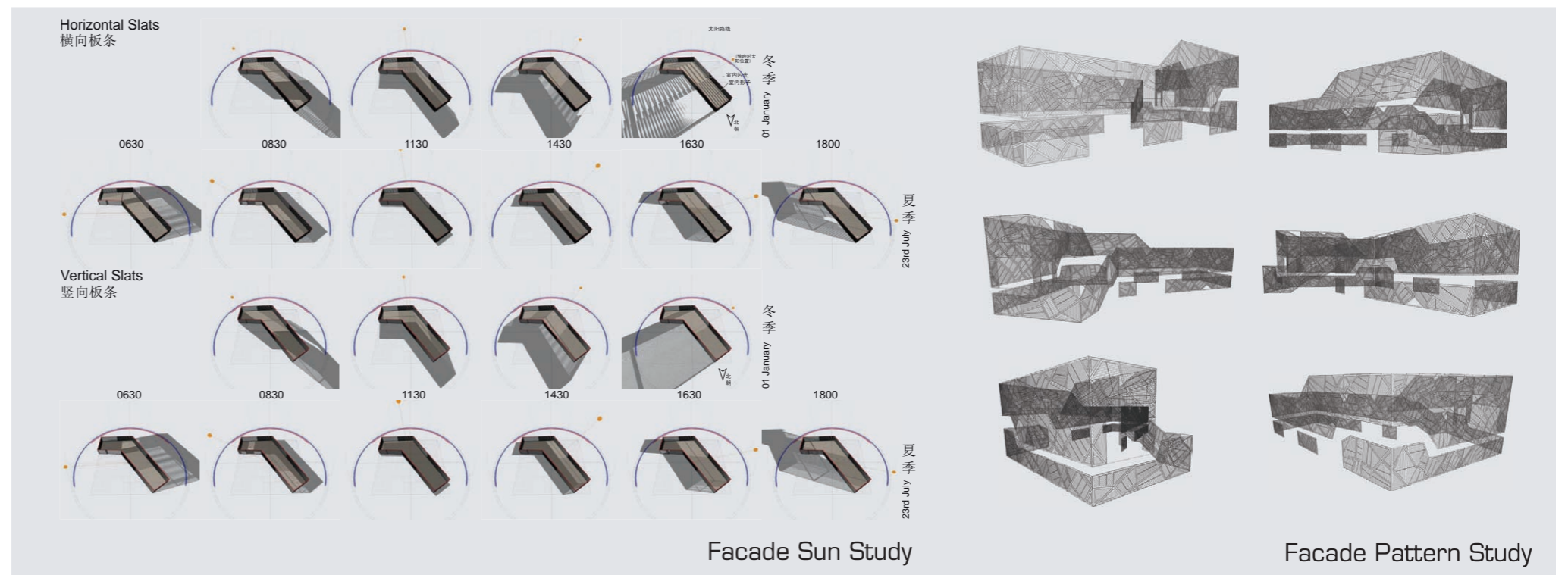
Client: Mr Li Gang, Great Industries Enterprise

Design Firm: SKEW Collaborative

Principal Architects: H. Koon Wee, Eunice Seng, Darren Zhou

Team: I-Shin Chow, Xiong Haiying, Pauline Dai, Ji Lijun, Wang Peng, Teoh Renjie, Beatrix Redlich

Green Dot Award Category: Build, Industrial



Engaging Community: Critique of Production and Consumption

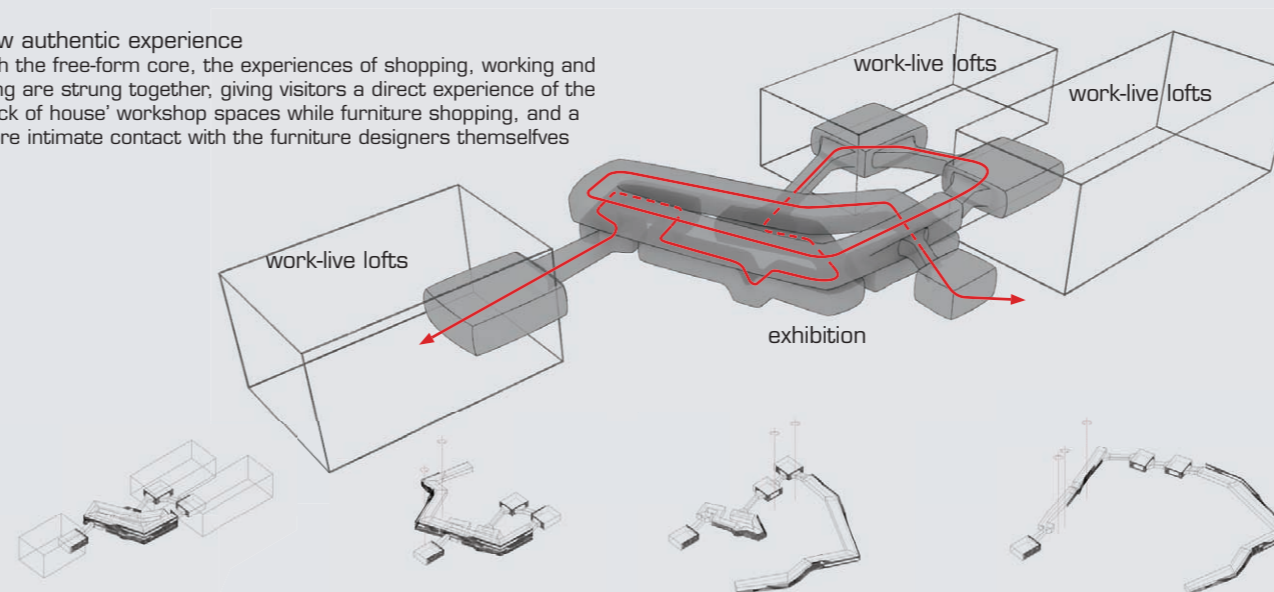
We live in an age where we are no longer acquainted with the origins and production of the goods we consume, often unwittingly exposing ourselves to materials that may be hazardous to our health, or goods that are produced under unfair or exploitative production practices. In pursuing this project, while the primary goal was to establish elegant and practical exhibition spaces, we felt there was a responsibility to bring visitors to the more gritty production houses behind-the-scene. In fact, one may argue this is exactly what an educated consumer seeks today – to learn about the responsible practices of the manufacturers, the ethics of the designers, the social and environmental responsibility towards the acquisition of the raw materials, the tools of the manufacturing process, and so on.

The project also attempts to critique the state of industrial production in China. The industrial landscape within China tends to be nothing more than large sheds built at a minimum cost, with little consideration for the workers. The design agenda for this project therefore also aimed to generate a more responsible approach towards this very system of production. Exhibition programs have traditionally gone hand in hand with manufacturing and industrial programs in China, and hence the notion of integration to the surroundings must be seen from such said programs' contributions towards the production and consumption cycle itself. The ambition, therefore, was to generate more open and public access to the processes of manufacturing, and in so doing, to empower a community of production workers who are aware that there is a counterpart to their work – a community of educated consumers who seek to know what goes into the designs and goods that are being produced.

This building therefore integrated the display and production spaces of creative industries into a single mixed-use building complex, consisting of an exhibition hall and three work-live atelier buildings. The primary spatial strategy was to create a seamless relationship between spaces of production and consumption, so that visitors and consumers could be reconnected with the knowledge and appreciation of the processes of making and production. It was this form of integration, designed to link up socio-economic and environmental relationships with that of architecture and its site, that we aimed for in the design; it was an integration that would allow consumers and producers to reject the alienating effects of globalization.



new authentic experience
with the free-form core, the experiences of shopping, working and living are strung together, giving visitors a direct experience of the 'back of house' workshop spaces while furniture shopping, and a more intimate contact with the furniture designers themselves



Continuous Circulation Concept Diagram

free form core
traditional vertical cores are stretched out in a horizontal maze, using the linear logic of an efficient transfer of people, work flow and communications

Unfolding the Core

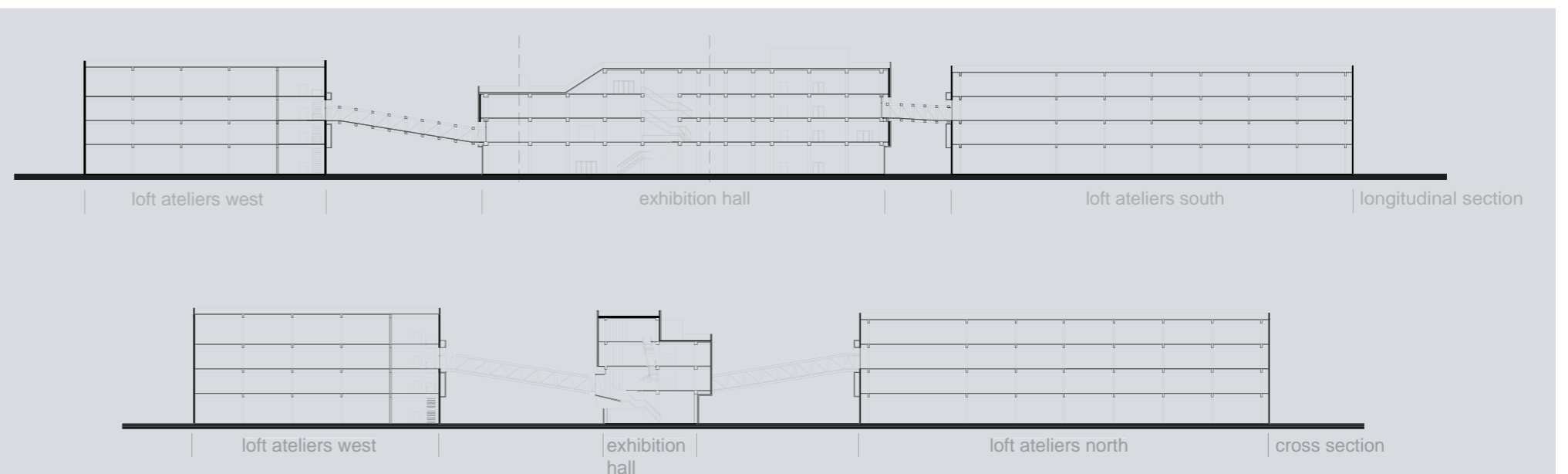
A New Urbanism

Even though the site is located at the periphery of Shanghai, we recognized that a new kind of space had to be designed for this community. The form and orientation of the exhibition hall was determined by a need to create smaller zones for social interaction and circulation between the atelier buildings, as well as the micro-urbanism of the site. The resultant pockets of landscape and courtyard became social spaces of engagement that could be used by workers, both from the complex and from the traditional neighboring factories, while the bridges allowed for unexpected encounters and shortcuts through the spaces.

While the many programmatic, visual, performative, and circulation criteria for the multi-sided exhibition hall proved challenging, it also gave special design character to the building. Additionally, the timber skin became a key environmental driver and design feature of the new complex. Through its iconicity, the complex has become an attractor for the site.



Site Plan



Building Sections



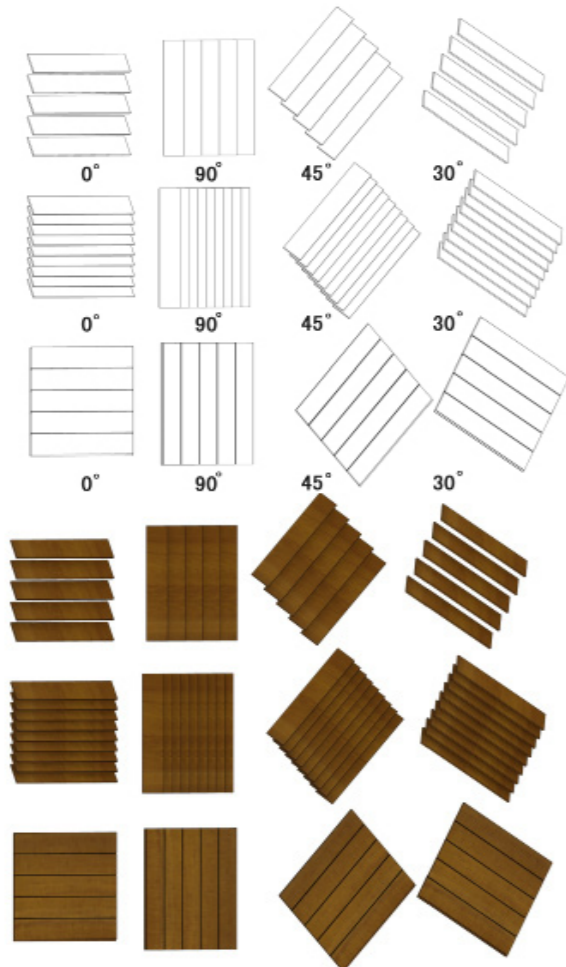
The Horizontal Core

The exhibition hall itself was designed in essence to be a horizontal core that is made visible on the exterior through a formally expressive wood cladding and steel framing system. This continuous core attempted to circulate visitors through the 4 buildings on an elevated level, enveloping the otherwise separate display spaces within the exhibition hall. Weaving through the complex across the bridges into different production studios and fabrication plants, visitors were re-oriented at different levels of communicating lobbies and stairs. In other words, the production programs were being held together in the center by the exhibition hall, allowing visitors to reach other spaces without getting off the circuit of exhibition. The core was stretched and circulation was prolonged through a retail strategy of linear persuasion, weaving visitors through a multitude of spatial experiences – from artificially lit exhibition interiors to exterior ramped bridges, from sleek exhibitions to design studios and untidy fabrication plants. The experience of the exhibition was therefore re-thought through this project, with the hope that a visitor's experience could be enhanced and authenticated by the connectivity between production and consumption

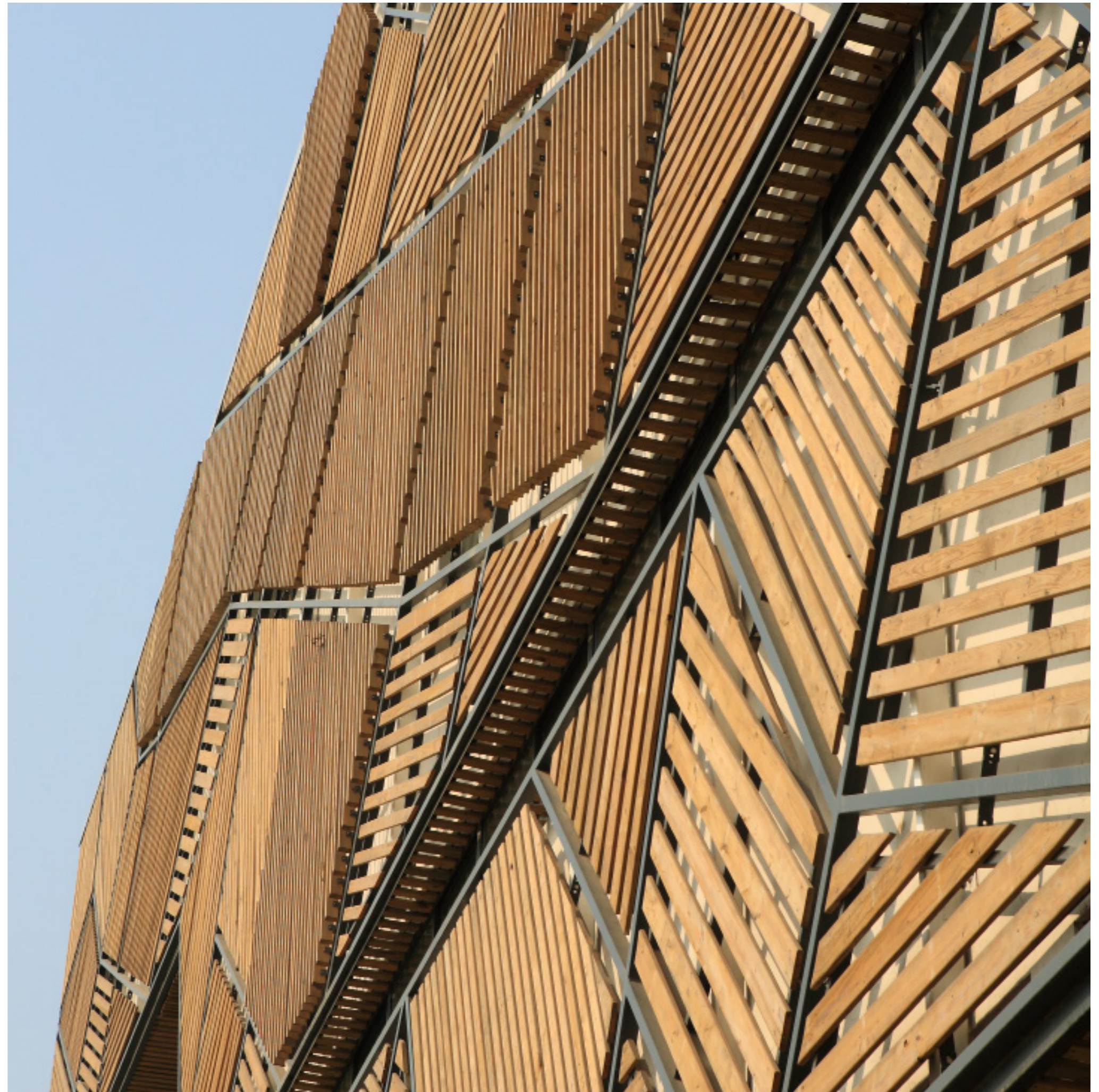
Sustainability as Architecture

A key contribution of this project towards green building practices can be seen in the shading louver details of the timber curtain wall of the exhibition hall. Using limited permutations of the timber louver depth and angles, as many as 12 types were developed to suit different sun angles and orientation. The directionality of the timber curtain wall system of the exhibition hall was not only designed as a continuous surface to promote the legibility of the building as a horizontal core system, it also gave unique possibilities for the control of views and sun-shading. Made from sustainable wood, the screen produced a myriad of different visual effects within the enclosed spaces, alternately providing shade, or limited views when necessary. The thickened skin also resulted in deep eave conditions to compensate for larger expanses of glazing where needed, and the screen additionally lowered the thermal gain of exterior walls at the exhibition hall potentially exposed to direct sunlight.

The atelier buildings were designed to contrast with the highly expressive exhibition hall, particularly in their emphasis on verticality and relative simplicity. This vertical thrust of the three ateliers resulted in a vertical window system designed to provide sufficient daylighting and ventilation, while keeping a generally tight thermal envelope through minimum fenestration.



Louver Permutation Studies



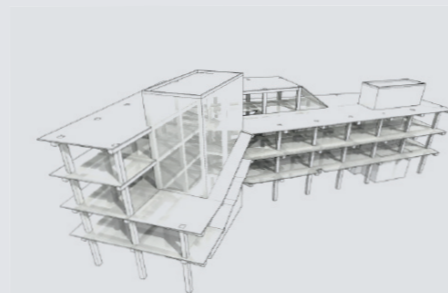
Rethinking Spaces of Production, Exhibition, and Consumption Through Sustainability

The design also subtly referenced an old courtyard house to the south that the client had restored for the purpose of converting it to an auxiliary arts space. There is a growing trend in the restoration of such historical houses as China's own rich heritage is being rediscovered after years of official suppression. The spatial complexities of these courtyard dwellings, as well as ideas of transitional spaces, layered views and framed nature were translated to the new exhibition hall. Both cultural spaces share a richness in visual experience, and the timber skin pattern of the new exhibition hall further dialogued with traditional screen (雕花窗) of the restored house.

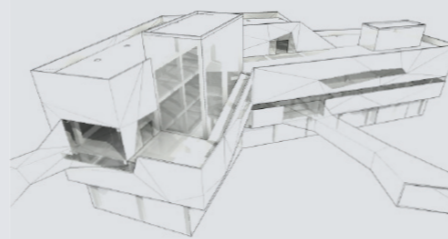
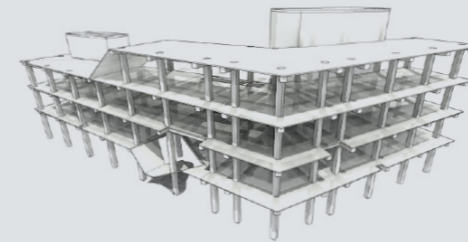
The Jia Little Exhibition Center is an ambitious project that seeks to address both socio-economic sustainability, as well as environmental sustainability, while simultaneously commenting on the tendencies of industrial and exhibition architectural design in China. The intervention not only aimed to critique commodity and modes of consumption, it also attempted to reinvent new relationships between the key constituencies that use the space, through newly configured architectural forms and programmatic adjacencies. At the same time, the project also demonstrated the as yet untapped design possibilities of industrial spaces in a country whose landscape is still dominated by prosaic factory complexes.

The ardent desire to create environmentally sustainable buildings, coupled with budgetary concerns, meant that we had to mine simple building methods for expressive architectural potential, e.g. the curtain wall screen, deep eaves, tight environmental envelope etc. These technologies were not simply applied to the buildings; they were didactic and become the very character of the architecture. Instead of utilizing technology that was applied, veneer-like, to a building, these passive, low-tech environmental principles were the prime generators of the form and identity of the project.

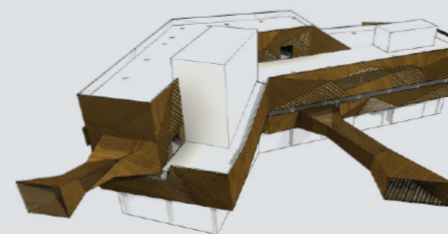
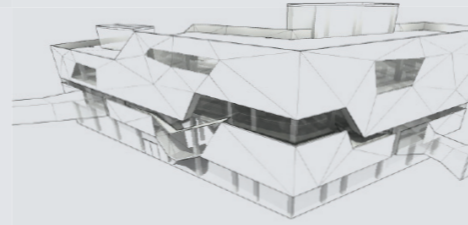
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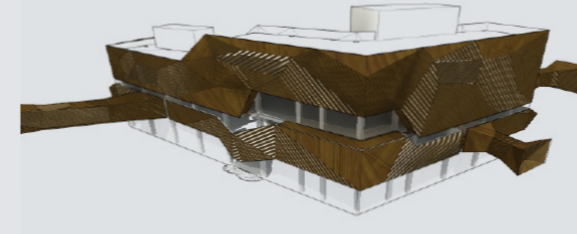
Structure



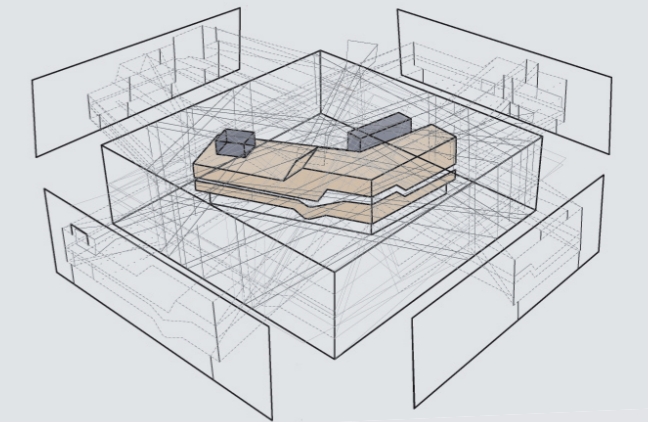
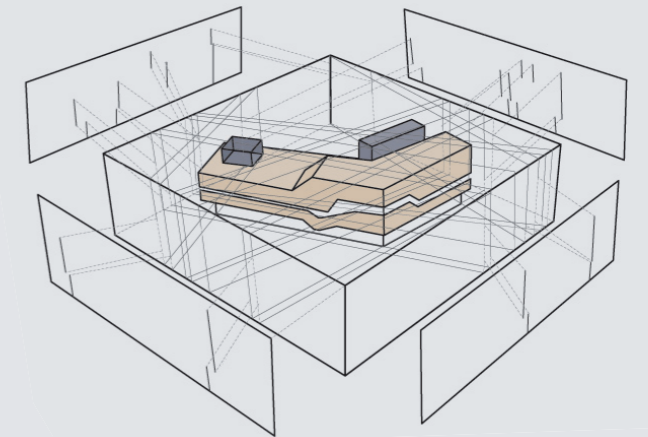
Envelope



Timber Curtain Wall



Structure, Wood, Glass



Circulation Sections as Facades