

LIFE SHANGHAI

ART

An integration of design, nature and heritage

By ZHANG KUN

At award-winning design firm Open Architecture, the job is not just about creating new buildings, but creating new life and promoting tolerance and inclusiveness in urban settings.

The firm's latest project, Tank Shanghai, located in the city's West Bund area, perfectly fits the bill, says Li Hu, the co-founder of Open Architecture. The new art space is made up of five oil tanks that were once used to store fuel for aircraft in the former Longhua Airport.

Furthermore, the space also combines natural landscapes with buildings and integrates a city park with contemporary art exhibitions, industrial heritage and humanitarian futurism, says Huang Wenjing, Li's wife and the co-founder of Open Architecture.

Unlike traditional art museums that are usually situated in a single building, the art space features five separate tanks that allow visitors to smell the flowers in the area and feel the breeze from the river while walking between exhibition halls, adds Huang.

"There are many cases around the world where heritage industrial sites are rebuilt for new purposes and functions," Li tells China Daily at one of the tanks. "But there has never been any case like this. This is the first of its kind."

Open Architecture started working on the art space project in 2013. To integrate art and nature, Li said that he added soil to the area to allow the growing of plants. The firm also introduced a sinking square that invites visitors to walk along

passages flanked by trees and paved with small black pebbles before reaching the central lobby of the art space.

To breathe new life into the tanks, Li installed oval windows in the tanks to usher in natural light and created diverse spaces for dining, live performances and educational functions. Visitors can also climb to the top of one of the tanks to admire a view of the surroundings.

Li recalls the construction of the new art space frequently drew curious onlookers who were strolling along the river. He says he hopes this would again be the case when the space officially opens, adding that the art space is meant for everyone and not just society's elites.



Li Hu (right) and his wife Huang Wenjing are co-founders of Open Architecture, which turned some vintage tanks into a public art space.

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"I wish buildings can inspire new ways of living, help us to tolerate each other, love the Earth and cherish the world we live in," he says.

Li, 46, studied architecture at Tsinghua University in Beijing and Rice University in the United States. A former partner of the prestigious Steven Holl Architects, Li says he was a recipient of the "50 under 50: Innovators of the 21st century" accolade.

Set up in 2008, Open Architecture is registered in both Beijing and New York. The firm's Chinese arm has since won multiple international awards in design in the US, the United Kingdom and Germany.

Some of Open Architecture's most notable projects include the Dune Art Museum on the beach of the Beidaihe resort in North China's Hebei province, the Fangshan campus of Beijing No 4 High School and the ongoing Pinghe International School in Qingpu district of Shanghai.



The interior of tank No 3 at Tank Shanghai, where Argentine sculptor Adrian Villa Rojas' work will be showcased from March 23 to Aug 24.



Tank Shanghai, a contemporary art center rebuilt from five giant tanks by the Huangpu River, will open soon in the West Bund area in Xuhui district of Shanghai. The tanks were once used to store fuel for a nearby airport. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Admiring art in fuel tanks

Set in a former airport, a new cultural landmark in the West Bund area will hold three exhibitions as part of its grand opening in late March, **Zhang Kun** reports in Shanghai.

A new cultural landmark called Tank Shanghai, an art space which comprises five repurposed giant oil tanks, will open in the West Bund area along the Huangpu River on March 23.

The tanks that make up this art space used to be part of the facilities of Longhua Airport, the city's first aviation hub.

The West Bund area that flanks the Huangpu is one of the most active art and culture centers in downtown Shanghai. The area is home to a cluster of important art and cultural institutions, such as the Long Museum, the Shanghai Center of Photography and the new Pompidou Centre Shanghai, which is still under construction. Situated across Longteng Avenue from the art space is the West Bund Art Center, the venue for an annual art fair in November that was attended by more than 100 leading galleries around the world.

Occupying 60,000 square meters, the art space was founded by Qiao Zhibing, a renowned collector of contemporary art. According to Qiao, the space is a multifunctional cultural hub that combines exhibition venues with parkland, a plaza, a bookstore, an education center and a restaurant. The project took more than five years to complete.

Three exhibitions will be held in celebration of the art space's grand opening. The largest tank,



Tank Shanghai combines exhibition venues with parkland, a plaza, a bookstore, an education center and a restaurant.

No 5, will host TeamLab, a renowned group in the global contemporary art scene that dabbles with new media. Here, the group will present a large interactive digital art show called *Universe of Water Particles in the Tank*.

The art space exhibition will be TeamLab's largest show in China. The title work *Universe of Water Particles in the Tank, Transcending Boundaries*, will feature an enormous waterfall which appears to cascade down the interior surface of the tank. Other works will depict flowers throughout the seasons, as well as a projection of waves.

Over at tank No 3, visitors will find Argentinean sculptor Adrian Villa Rojas' exhibition titled "Sometimes you wonder, in an interconnected universe, who is dreaming whom?"

Meanwhile, tank No 4 will be used to host a group exhibition titled *Under Construction* that showcases works by leading Chinese artists such as Ding Yi, Liu Xiaodong and Zhang Xiaogang.

The opening exhibitions were designed to reflect the vision of Qiao, a collector of contemporary art globally. The 52-year-old entrepreneur, who started collecting contemporary Chinese art in 2006, says the reason

behind setting up the art space was his desire to work with artists and introduce their new ideas to the public as well as channel the spotlight onto emerging young Chinese artists.

Shanghai's first airport, Longhua Airport, was located in the area surrounding the art space since 1917. Although the airport was closed in 1966, it wasn't until 2008 that it was demolished to make way for the construction of the new Longyao Road Tunnel under the Huangpu.

In 2012, State-owned enterprise West Bund Development Co was founded to carry out the comprehensive development of the Xuhui waterfront area by the Huangpu, which includes the establishment of 20 cultural institutions and six theaters in the area. Aside from culture and art, the West Bund area is also a thriving zone filled with finance and high-tech enterprises.

There were originally seven tanks used for fuel storage at the airport. Following the redevelopment, two of the tanks were torn down and a new heliport was built at the site. The remaining five oil tanks, the highest of which has a height of 19 meters and a diameter of 28 meters, were redesigned by the award-winning firm Open Architecture to become the new art space.

Contact the writer at zhangkun@chinadaily.com.cn

Yayoi Kusama exhibition kicks off in China

By ZHANG KUN

One of the most iconic contemporary artists in the world today, 90-year-old Yayoi Kusama from Japan is having a large-scale exhibition at the Fosun Foundation in Shanghai.

The new exhibition is "tailor-made" specifically for Fosun Foundation Shanghai, according to Duanmu Xiazi, artistic director of the institution. Although Kusama was not in Shanghai for the exhibition, staff from her studio had made repeated visits to Fosun to ensure the exhibits perfectly complement the architecture of the Fosun Foundation, which is located along the Bund.

More than 40 of the artist's works, all of which represent highlights of her illustrious 70-year career, are on

show, including the famous installation *Infinity Mirrored Rooms*, a three-meter-tall outdoor pumpkin sculpture located in front of the museum, and a three-dimensional polka-dot installation that fills a 100-square-meter space.

On the third floor of the exhibition hall, visitors will find the series of Kusama's paintings titled *My Eternal Soul*. Included in this series are two new pieces that she created in 2018.

"In this exhibition, I will mainly be presenting my new works, as well as works that resonate with the architecture," Kusama says in a statement.

In response to the copycat exhibition of her works that toured multiple cities in China, including Shanghai and Changsha of Hunan province, Kusama says: "I'm disap-

pointed to see the creations I have infused with my heart and soul being stolen and presented improperly. I want people to see real art — and this exhibition at Fosun Foundation is a great opportunity for that."

Born in 1929, Kusama has a history of mental illness which started when she was a child. She claimed before that she started hallucinating when she was 10 and among the visions she had flowers spoke to her. But instead of allowing it to debilitate her, Kusama turned the illness into a source of creative energy, drawing dense arrays of polka dots across large monochrome canvases. She gradually developed her own artistic style and applied them to a wide range of media, from paintings to installations, performance art and literature.

Her art has been affiliated with

minimalism, pop culture and Zero movement. Today, she is one of the most celebrated artists frequently on exhibition all over the world.

Fosun Foundation chairwoman Wang Jinyuan says Kusama's iconic visual images such as the polka dots and mirrors are "simple and powerful — suitable for all ages".

"The root cause is fear, but what she expresses is great love," says Wang. "What people perceive in the art of Yayoi Kusama is the mystery of the vastness of the universe and the breadth of the human spirit."

Starting from *Invisible Life*, which is a path lined with convex mirrors, the audience will step into the world of the artist, with immersive and reflective installations. To ensure that visitors have an enjoyable viewing experience, only 150 people are allowed in the exhibition



Yayoi Kusama, an iconic artist active in the contemporary art world for 70 years, is holding a major exhibition at Fosun Foundation Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

space at any time.

"We will erect signs displaying the estimated waiting time," Duanmu tells China Daily.

"We care more about how each person experiences Yayoi Kusama's art rather than the number of visitors."