Ningbo History Museum, 2008
Ningbo, Zhejiang, China. Total floor area: 30,000㎡ Photo: Yutaro Tomii

WATARI-UM is pleased to announce its coming exhibition of the architects Wang Shu and Lu Wenyu. Wang Shu received Pritzker Architecture Prize in 2012 and they have been chosen as the curators of the 2027 Venice Architecture Biennale. This will be their first major exhibition in Japan.

Next exhibition

Wang Shu + Lu Wenyu
Architecture as Garden

Dec. 4, 2026 - March 28, 2027

Closed on Mondays (open on Jan. 11 and March 22) and Dec. 31 to Jan. 4
Open hours: 11:00–19:00
Admission fee: Adults 1,500 yen / Pair discount 2,600 yen / Student (high school to 25 years), Seniors (70 years and over), Visitors with disabilities, their caregiver (up to 1) with ID 1,300 yen / Children (elementary to junior high) 500 yen

Planning: WATARI-UM, The Watari Museum of Contemporary Art
Organization: Executive Committee of Wang Shu + Lu Wenyu Architectural Exhibition
Curation: Wang Shu / Lu Wenyu / Takeshi Sukegawa / Koji Ichikawa / WATARI-UM, The Watari Museum of Contemporary Art
Venue design: FUJIWALABO
Publication: millegraph

Cooperation: Amateur Architecture Studio / School of Architecture China Academy of Art
Special cooperation: Air China / Kasei Bussan Co.,Ltd. / TEIKA Co., Ltd.
Subsidy: WINDOW RESEARCH INSTITUTE / Kao Foundation / The Asahi Shimbun Foundation
Support: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan / Architectural Institute of Japan / Japan Institute of Architects / Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan

Venue: **WATARI-UM, The Watari Museum of Contemporary Art**

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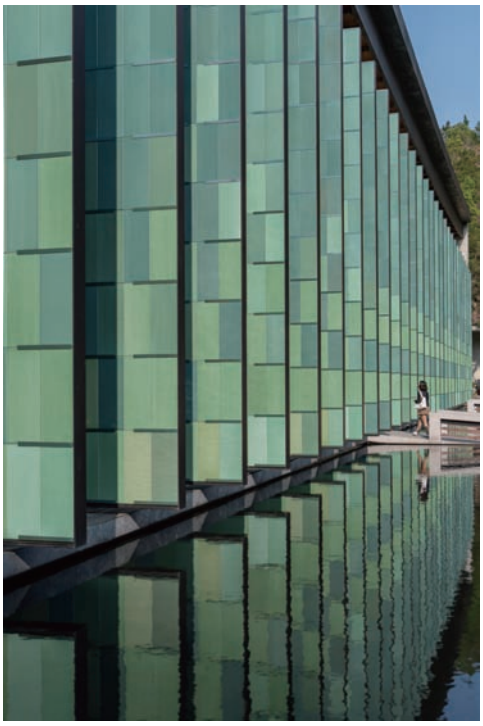
WATARI-UM
The Watari Museum of Contemporary Art

Creating a garden reveals an alternative architecture that is totally different from the one we know today.
It is an architectural practice that is both quite vernacular and spiritual.
— Wang Shu



Hangzhou National Archives of Publications and Culture
2022
Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China
Total floor area: 103,100㎡
Photo: Yutaro Tomii

Wang Shu and Lu Wenyu continued their unique architectural practice in China under rapid urbanization and economic development, since they founded the Amateur Architecture Studio in Hangzhou in 1997.
Their vision, Architecture as Garden 建築即園林, is derived from their deep insight into yuánlín 園林, Chinese traditional garden. With elements such as trees, stones, water, bridges and arbors, yuánlín creates a world by blending natural and artificial things. It is not untouched nature; it is another environment deriving from mixture of nature and human imagination. Wang and Lu inherited this literati-like idea of garden into contemporary architecture and cultivated the new possibility of architecture, referring the Chinese traditional cultures including sansuiga [landscape ink painting], poetry and writings, crafts as well as vernacular materials and techniques. In their architecture, the tiles and bricks gathered from the demolished communities are not just recycled materials; the Wapan walls, the walls made from soil on the construction site, stonework, and wood and bamboo frames and finishes are the important media to evoke the disappearing memory of those places and to bring another sense of time into contemporary urban life.
The exhibition introduces their architectural world where nature and artificiality, materiality and embodiment, memory and future are intermingled, through the actual size mockups, drawings, models, sketches, movies, photographs and a tearoom which is newly designed and built for this show. Visitors would walk around the museum as a garden, experiencing the attractions of their architecture that has been developed over time.

Taihu hole
Free-form openings were inspired by strangely shaped Taihu stone in Chinese traditional garden
Photo: Yutaro Tomii

Wapan wall
A façade of bricks and tiles rebuilt from the demolished community houses
Photo: Yutaro Tomii

Main exhibits — Exhibition as a garden

Visitors will experience the architecture of Wang Shu and Lu Wenyu in various scales like walking in a garden in this exhibition which makes use of the WATARI-UM exhibition space spanning three floors.
The exhibits mainly consists of four elements: the actual size mockups, architectural documents such as drawings, models and sketches, movies and photographs, and a tearoom.

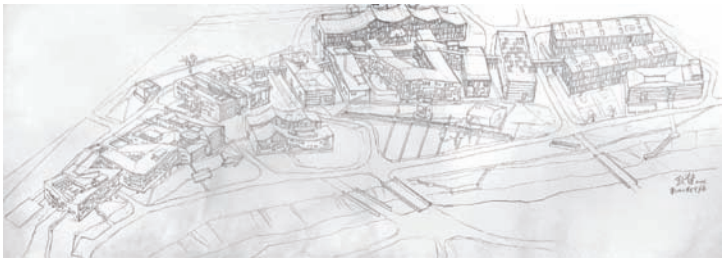
Actual size mockups and "material-boards"

Wang and Lu's architecture is characterized by its texture and materiality, as well as the adventurous construction method with their unique and modern interpretation of Chinese traditional building technique. The exhibition features the wooden frame and real-size mockups of bamboo and soil wall that are often used in their architecture. Visitors can physically experience the materials and its texture. In addition, the "material-board" as a palette for various materials will show how roof-tiles, bricks, soil, wood and bamboo make an expression and space of the architecture.

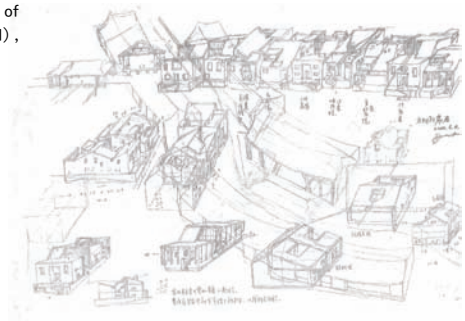
Quarter scale mockup of the wooden frame of the Lin'an Museum

Drawings, models and sketches

Wang and Lu conceive their architecture through a huge number of handwritten studies. The exhibition introduces their sketches and conceptual models made in the early stages of the architectural projects, in addition to the completed plan drawings. Visitors can trace the process of their design: how the architecture is conceived, experimented, and formed over time.



Drawing for the Xiangshan Campus of the China Academy of Art (Phase II) , 2005.
64.9×22.8cm Pencil on paper



Drawing for the Wencun Village Project, 2014.
42×29.7cm
Pencil on paper

Movies and photographs

Unlike the rapid changing contemporary China, Wang and Lu's architectural works give somewhat slow moving atmosphere. The movies and photographs in the exhibition will show the unique sense of time. The newly taken photographs for the exhibition will be published in the book released in commemoration of the show.

Wencun Village Project
2016
Hangzhou, Zhejiang
Total floor area: 28,400㎡
Photo: Yutaro Tomii

Tearoom

Their base, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, is known for Longjing tea (Dragon Well tea), where tea cultures has been developed since Southern Song Dynasty [1127-1279]. A contemporary-style tearoom will be installed on the fourth floor; it will be made of prefabrication unit using bamboo and wood, and specially designed for this exhibition. The tearoom will be open to the visitors as a place for relaxation, as the original purpose of Chinese tearoom.

Xiangshan Campus of the China Academy of Art (Phase II)
2007
Hangzhou, Zhejiang
Total floor area: 80,000㎡
Photo: Yutaro Tomii

Related projects for Wang Shu + Lu Wenyu: Architecture as Garden

Symposium

To commemorate the exhibition, a symposium with Japanese architects will be held in early December.

Publication

Featuring from early works to the latest projects, a new book will be published in commemoration of the exhibition. This book will include a dialogue between Wang Shu, Lu Wenyu and the architect Kazuyo Sejima, and the detailed explanation written by Koji Ichikawa, an architectural historian and one of the curators of the exhibition.
Publisher: millegraph
Size: 224×297mm
Language: Japanese and English
It will be released in December, 2026.

Wang Shu + Lu Wenyu

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Wang Shu（王澍） is an architect who was born in 1963. He received his first degree in architecture in 1985 and his Masters degree in 1988, both from the Nan Nanjing Institute of Technology. In 2000, he received a Doctor of Architecture degree from Tongji University. He is Professor and Head of the Architecture School at China Academy of Art, Hangzhou. He co-founded Amateur Architecture Studio with Lu Wenyu in 1997.

Lu Wenyu（陸文宇） is an architect who was born in 1967. She graduated from the Nanjing Institute of Technology. She is Professor of the Architecture School at China Academy of Art, Hangzhou. She co-founded Amateur Architecture Studio with Wang Shu in 1997.

Amateur Architecture Studio（業余建築工作室）is led by Wang and Lu, which was founded in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China in 1997. The word Amateur carries their critical attitude, like Chinese traditional literati – not to follow the mega construction companies and the rapid market system – thus considering architecture according to their "internal criteria." They have explored the new possibility of architecture and nature, old and new, material and time, form and space, referring the Chinese traditional cultures including gardens, sansuiga [landscape ink painting], crafts as well as vernacular materials and techniques.

The representative architectural works includes the Xiangshan Campus of the China Academy of Art, Ningbo Museum of Art, Hangzhou Zhongshan Road Conservation and Renovation Project, Wencun Village Project, Fuyang Cultural Complex, Lin'an Museum and Hangzhou National Archives of Publications and Culture. Wang Shu's writing works include "How the Design Begins 設計的開始" and "Designing a House 造房子".

Their works have gathered international attention and reputation after the turn of the 21st century. In 2010, Wang Shu and Lu Wenyu were awarded the Schelling Architecture Prize. In 2011, Wang Shu received the Gold Medal of Architecture (grande médaille d'or) from the l'Académie d'Architecture of France. In 2012, Wang became the first Chinese citizen to win the Pritzker Prize. Lu Wenyu chaired the 2024 RIBA International Prize jury.

Contact about the exhibition: WATARI-UM, The Watari Museum of Contemporary Art

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