

christina luk

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Shanghai



I enjoyed drawing and making things when I was growing up. I could be very meticulous and focused, almost in another zone, when I was trying to get a painting or a sculpture to my satisfaction. I enjoyed the creative process and I liked to see how things are put together, so I was quite determined to join the art and design industry.

As a teenager growing up in Hong Kong, there's a belief that art and design is not a serious path, so I only treated it as a hobby. Then I was lucky to have the chance to study math and fine arts abroad in England at the Sherborne School for Girls. I thought I was going to go to an art college in Great Britain, so I took a BTEC Foundation art and design course at Middlesex University, but by the time I discovered my interests in 3D design, it was already too late to apply to architecture faculties in England. It was



Photo by PETER DIXIE

A dining space found at the bottom of a staircase at the Noodle Diner Sanlitun SOHO



Photo by DIRK WEIBLEN

also the time that my family decided to move to Toronto. So I applied to the bachelor of architecture program at the University of Toronto, and I got in. I learned a lot during those five intensive years.

My first job out of college was at Taylor Hazell Architects in Toronto. The company specialized in architectural restoration, and I would go to old buildings like Casa Loma with my supervisor to sketch gargoyles or copper flashing details.



Stacked gift boxes line Aimé Pâtisserie in Shanghai



Requiem: The Laundry's March exhibition



A rendering of fashion consignment store Chuang X Yi from Value Retail Outlet in Shanghai

In my heart I knew I wanted to eventually work in Asia. However, I was not ready to leave Toronto right after graduation. B+H Architects was hiring, and I was attracted by the fact that they have an established office in Shanghai. I thought maybe one day I could work there. I was very lucky that this became reality.

My first project at B+H was actually in Shanghai—a mixed-use complex with two towers in Pudong. It was my first experience of China's architectural boom. Then I spent two years working on the gallery design of the Royal Ontario Museum. It was a joint venture with Haley Sharpe Design, and it was quite a painstaking process because there were a lot of parties involved. Before I relocated to the Shanghai office, I worked on a few design proposals, including some surreal masterplanning for a whole city in Abu Dhabi. Although it was excellent training for effective presentation skills, I yearned for the knowledge to transform these ideas on paper into reality.

I admired Neri&Hu's sensibility and skills in reviving Chinese elements into contemporary design. I wanted to learn how they make such beautiful projects. When I applied in 2009, [principals] Lyndon Neri and Rossana Hu just landed the Le Méridien Zhengzhou, the biggest project at that point for the young boutique office. Coming from a rather corporate culture, I suppose they saw someone who would be comfortable managing big projects.

I met my husband and we decided to renovate an old apartment in Shanghai and call it home. I had such a sharp learning curve being the client, designer, and coordinator all at the same time. At that point I had eight years of working experience in architecture. [but] this small

personal project made me realize how little I knew. I tried, and of course I still made wrong decisions at times, but I also learned how I could fix them. It was an experience both humbling and gratifying, and I wanted more. I decided to quit my job, and started Lukstudio in 2012.

I am most proud of Requiem: The Laundry's March. It was a pop-up installation in an urban art festival. We took bamboo sticks, hanging laundry, and wire hangers—things that would be seen in an everyday context—and reorganized them into a space that every viewer could relate to and appreciate. It was temporary but very powerful.

Most challenging part of the job: To communicate clearly and thoroughly to the contractors and fabricators whom we rely on to build our ideas.

Most rewarding part of the job: To make possible what others consider impossible.

Guilty pleasure: Pringles. Once I open the tube, I cannot stop until it's clear.

My tombstone should read: Christina Luk, who tried to improve herself and her world, one project at a time.

Select Completed Projects

- LAB, Shanghai
- Aimé Pâtisserie, Shanghai
- The Noodle Rack, Changsha, China
- Requiem: The Laundry's March, Shanghai
- Noodle Diner Sanlitun SOHO, Beijing

Select Projects on the Boards

- Atelier Peter Fong, Guangzhou, China
- Arda showroom, Jiaxing, China
- Locations for Pantry's Best in Shanghai, Beijing, and Hangzhou, China