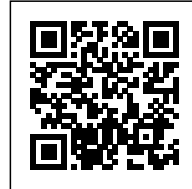




DONGZHUANG MUSEUM

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Western or Eastern?

DongZhuang-Building Museum of Western Regions, is located in Tuoli Township of Nanshan Grasslands, 30 km from Urumqi City. It was built on the site of a former grain shop that existed more than sixty years ago.





Since ancient times, architectural design that is inspired by the natural landscape has always been exciting. The museum building, facing the city to the south and backed by the mountain to the north, does not disturb the surrounding vegetation. From afar, it looks like an off-white stone that has rolled down from the mountain, standing quietly and naturally in the open and vast Gobi desert of Inner Eurasia.





Part of the museum was designed as a guest house containing a private art gallery; the rest is open to the public where visitors can find respite.



Cement, sand, only the necessary rebars and a minimum of glass are all components of the building, pursuing ecological protection and resource conservation. The thick walls and small windows shield against the scorching sun in summer and the cold in winter. The principles and methods of traditional techniques for cavity walls, rammed earth, sun-dried mud bricks and laying stones are adopted to construct a simple, reliable and durable building. The texture of the materials is highlighted on the building's surface to obtain a "natural" completeness for a non-specific space.





The design respecting the data framework and ecological cycle reflects the diversity, liberty and obscurity of local life and endows the building with liberty, freedom and vitality. DongZhuang is a "transparent" presence, with no clear internal floors, the possibility of uncertain and multiple applications, and UDLR interconnection. It takes advantage of natural presences in a smart way to protect against wind and snow and to ensure ventilation and day lighting. The perfect concave-convex matching, with the outer space and the existing space chiseled and space "created" as required for the workers' needs, makes a building that joins the concepts of "harmony" and "container".



Design principles:

- 1 The building shall be durable and firm enough to stand up to violent storms, sand storms, and ultraviolet rays.
- 2 Buildings should not be built to show off wealth and test technologies, especially in poor areas. Local materials and applicable folk building technologies will be used for the building.
- 3 Good-looking is not beauty; and beauty often lasts for a short while with the shift of aesthetic trends. A pleasant and well-adapted building with multiple functions is a good building, and durability is a synonym for history, symbolic function and localism.
- 4 It is preferable for a house in the desert hinterland to emerge in harmony with nature and perish by itself as time goes by.
- 5 Natural light is preferred to artificial light, as the latter is dependent on too much input and the sun and the moon are really splendid and reliable.
- 6 The internal and external space of the building is homogeneous, and flow and stagnancy is reciprocal causation as the space exists of itself.



Plans



Sections

The texture of the bricks used for the walls and the ceramic tiles in the floors is completed under the efforts of the designers and 23 local Artux constructors. For memory and respect, the designers



engraved the latter's names on the "five stars" red brick. North: the wall is fortified to resist strong winds. East: an opening is provided for enjoying the blue sky and white clouds along with the beautiful small river, the temples and the mountains. South: owing to the scenery made up of green hills and trees, and the smoke from kitchen chimneys rising from the shepherd families, together with the bright sunshine and the gentle and pleasant breeze, it is a good idea to drink milk tea in the courtyard, basking in the sunshine, beside the screen work of the vertical ladder. West: one can enjoy the warm image of the setting sun shining through the fruit trees, the stream flowing quietly, and people heading home for the evening. One can open the skylight of the roof to let in the light from the stars and the moon, observe the universe, while listening to the twittering of swallows. Previously, there were many bird's nests on the northwest corner. The designers planted flowers and plants in the space between the stairs and the water tank to build a "Bird's Nest" open to the south for returning swallows. Before the construction, scores of apple trees, *Elaeagnus angustifolia* (Russian Olive) and elm trees that stood in the yard of the old grain shop were moved to the southeastern corner of the square of the village primary school, and then restored after the main structure was completed.





The theory of uncertain design has been drawn from the experience of architectural design in the Western Regions for decades, which not only requires craftsmanship, and but also should incorporate awareness that comes from the depth of one's soul, and the quality of respecting natural space. According to the uncertain design theory, a building is compared to a potato: the seed of the potato is cut into irregular pieces, which are buried in the ground, so no one knows how large they may grow or they might look like. But they will grow up and be themselves for sure. The potato takes on its own image and natural skin after self-enrichment, due to the demands of inner growth and external pressures and bondage from the soil. The uncertain theory tries to give the space a "space", which is full of air, sunshine, airflow, moisture, heat and coolness, snow and rain and countless causes and effects relevant to stretching. Then their existence leads to the topic about life and reproduction. Reliability, continuity, non-utilitarianism, views of nature, an open view of the environment, free and versatile uses of space, the simplicity of materials, crafts and cost, and the expression of the most primitive, substantial and simple "blank" are all essential thought and action principles in the design of DongZhuang-Building Museum.



The place is mostly called "Western Region" in China, and "The East" by Europeans, so it is hard to define whether the building belongs to the East or the West.



