

The street of 1000 red jars

The Former French Concession has long put its stamp on this part of Shanghai, and it's obviously an honour for a French architect to design an urban space here in tune with its urbanism, its plane trees, narrow streets and inhabited landscapes. Between Ma Dang and Dan Shui streets, it was tempting to create a shortcut that would be an urban and commercial passageway, a sequence evoking vanished surroundings that have been completely reimaged and are new and modern; a high, narrow street that's covered and protected... The buildings need to know where they reside so as to create a desire for unique and unpredictable walks. Being open, our project fits into the quarter's geometry. The exterior, in a greyish-beige colour, offers glimpses through the two entrances on Ma Dang and Dan Shui streets, of a surprising array of lights, colours and vegetation. A shopping street on two levels, sequenced by overhead walkways and small bridges, is submerged between two flowery walls made up of rows of earthenware jars planted with different species, both green and coloured. The complementarity between the shops facing each other, the activities of the offices and the restaurants up under the roofs, creates a familiar and naturally animated street, setting pleasing walks as a target and offering an inviting new itinerary between Ma Dang and Dan Shui streets. Shadowplays produced by the adjustable slats of the blinds, in front of windows bordered by huge flowerpots, play on the mystery of presences and activities thereby protected, while inventing a landscape of vegetal friezes in the colours of the season and of the different flowers. The walls of the passageway will be painted in variations of brown, amber, orange and multiple reds. I've imagined all these loving details to enrich Shanghai, on the Huai Hai side, with this unique new open-and-covered street: 'the street of 1000 red jars'.

Jean Nouvel

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