

CELAP

China Executive Leadership of Pudong





China
Executive
Leadership
of Pudong

« Interpret the tradition »

Crédits

Project :

PROJECT

Construction of a university building, student housing and a gymnasium

Client :

CELAP

Location:

Pudong,
Shanghai, China

Surface area:

72 000 m²

Status :

delivered in 2005

Architect :

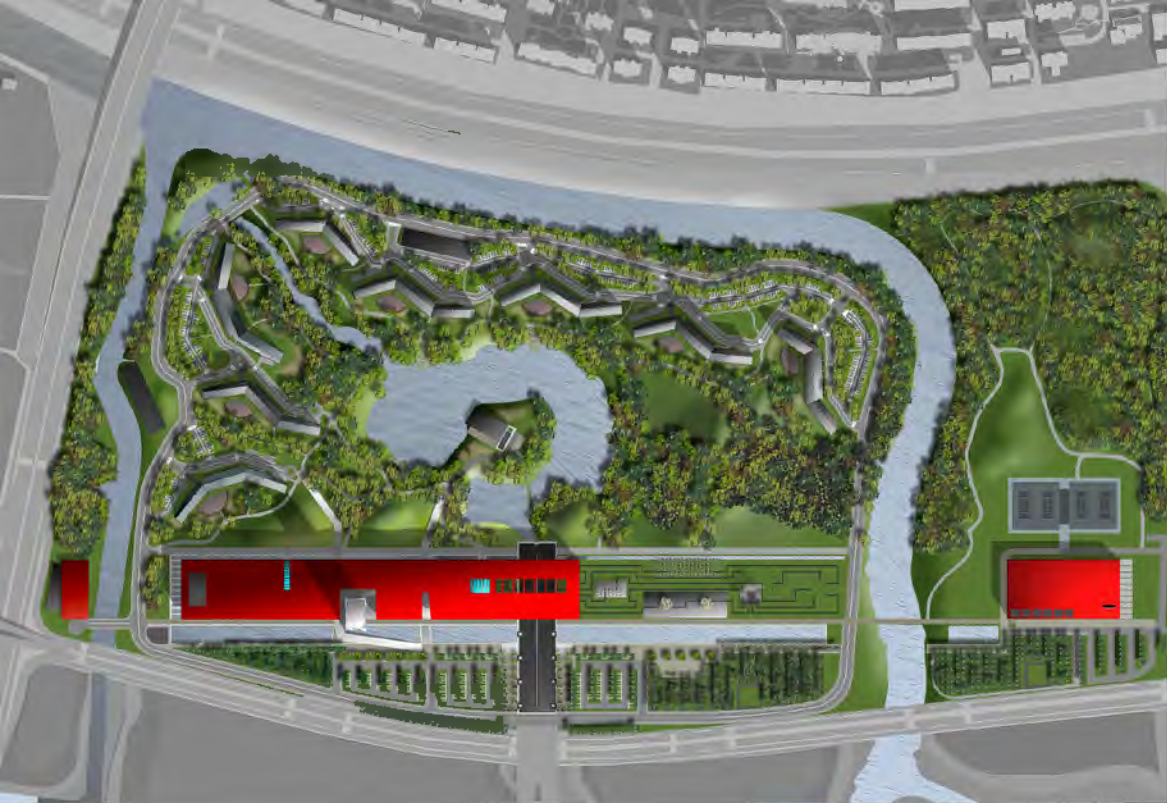
Agence d'Architecture A. Bechu
& Associés - Associate Architecte

: Tom Sheehan
INTERIOR DESIGNER
Volume ABC

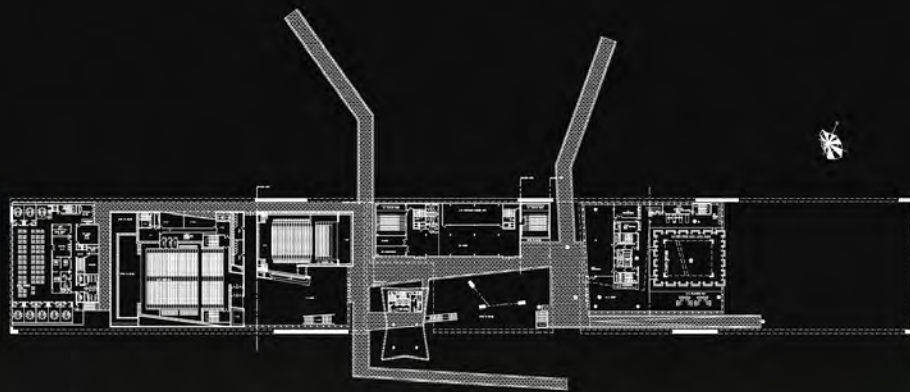
AWARDS

LUBAN PRIZE 2005





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Introduction

In 2003, our agency won its first project for a university and its campus. Designing the CELAP (China Executive Leadership Academy Pudong), based in Shanghai, China, was an extraordinary experience in terms of the project scope and programme as well as the encounters that took place.

A complex brief and a deadline of 25 months from initial concept to inauguration laid the framework for the construction of an 80-hectare campus. Our project was submitted to a 2-step global architecture competition and went up against 17 other renowned international architecture agencies.

With its bold contemporary reimagining of the traditional table used to learn calligraphy and its red lacquer paint, our winning project captured the attention of the Dean of the University and the future Chairman of the Party.

In 2005, the year in which it was delivered, the project won China's prestigious Luban Prize, awarded to the finest new building constructed each year.

Viewed from above and as a whole, the 300-metre 'table' forms the Chinese symbol for the number one, with an elemental garden at one end. The building is home to the country's Institute of Advanced Studies in Business Administration.

Viewed from within the campus gardens, only the sculptural feet of the 'table' and other free-standing forms stand out, embodying both stability and movement.



The painter's table is the symbolic object upon which all of China's knowledge is handed down. On this table, the master teaches the student calligraphy and painting: in other words, aesthetics and writing.

The table here becomes the university, with

Some words on the concept

The «CHINA EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY PUDONG» is the university that educates China's senior government executives (the equivalent of France's ENA or the UK's Oxbridge) and the country's elite business leaders (the equivalent of INSEAD).

This is where China's big business leaders hold regular seminars to communicate their political, internal and commercial strategies regarding the wider world to ministers and vice-ministers in training. PUDONG, the new financial capital of the 21st century, was selected as the ideal location for the 'China Executive Leadership Academy Pudong' to express the country's modernity moving forward.

To meet these criteria and objectives, our concept is based around a distinctive modern style that incorporates references to China's cultural roots, reinterpreting them with a masterful contemporary twist.

The painter's table is the symbolic object upon which all of China's knowledge is handed down. On this table, the master teaches the student calligraphy and painting: in other words, aesthetics and writing. The table here becomes the university, with the other buildings slotting beneath it.

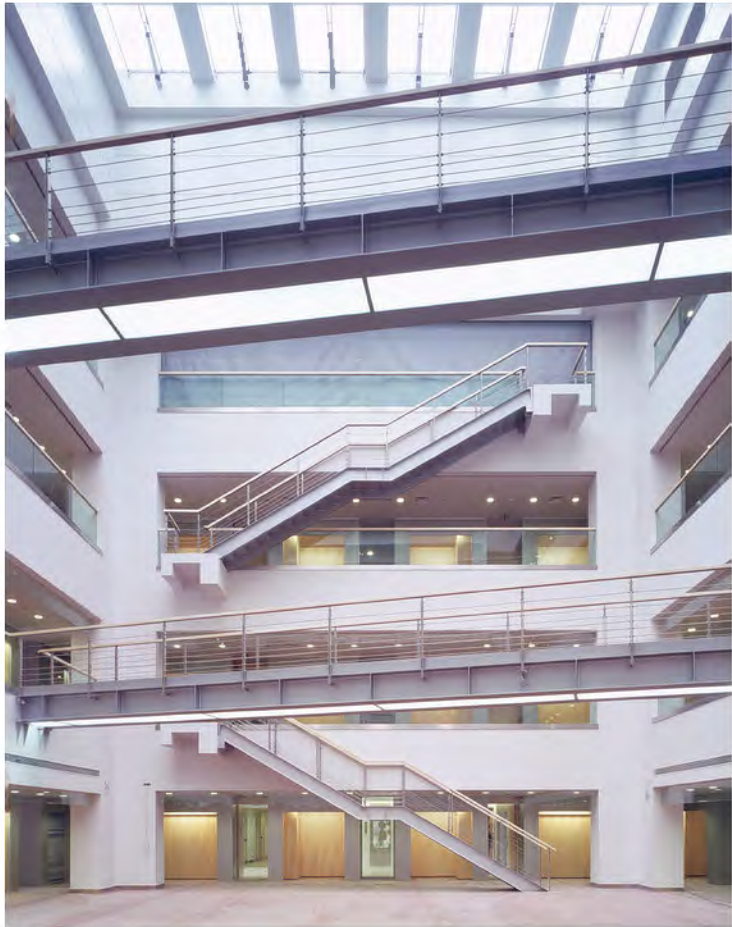
The design also symbolises the 'red line', a concept set out by Confucius. It becomes part of the landscape, a metaphor for the linear progress of learning and knowledge.

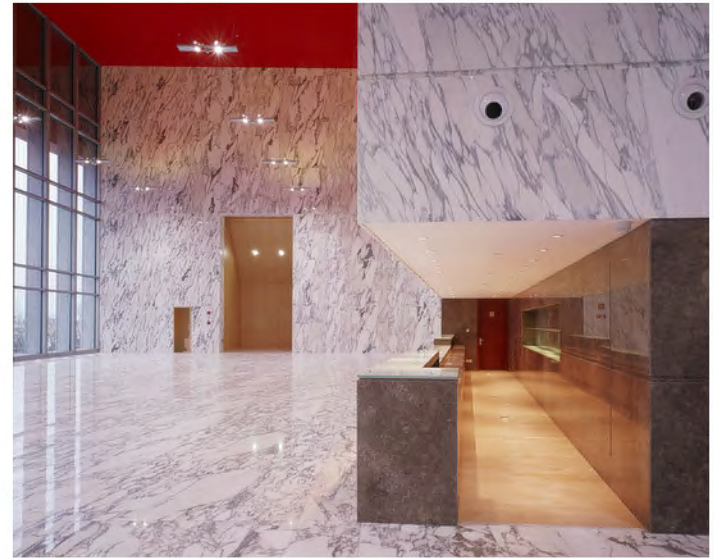
'The acquisition of knowledge proceeds along a line whose end point tends towards the knowledge of the master himself' – Confucius

This line allows us to densify the constructions along a single axis, thus freeing up a large part of the site for the creation of a natural park where housing can be incorporated against a green backdrop of nature bordered by water.

The university boasts some of the world's most advanced and outward-looking means of communication; this red line on the landscape affirms its human scale within the city.













The garden of 5 elements

A landscaping project that resonates with the area's history and culture.

The garden that we designed for CELAP is called the 'Garden of Memories'; it is intended as a response to the red line created across the landscape by the university building.

The line is made up of sequences given form by the table; each element of the Garden of Memories is a place that symbolises that line.

This garden is composed of 5 simple material elements that are essential to life. These natural and spiritual elements represent the signs of the Chinese Zodiac.

Walking through a Garden of Memories formed of poetic, pictorial and musical elements inspires calm and serenity and encourages meditation, a useful approach to prepare pupils' minds for learning.



The Wood Garden ***The Water Garden***

The Wood Garden is made up of tree trunks planted vertically into the soil and carved into the form of obelisks. This ordered series represents the Terracotta Army of Xi'an.

Wooden posts were carved into obelisks as early as ancient Egyptian times to emphasise the importance of a site.

To this day, the shape still symbolises an axis, a crossroads, verticality, and a spiritual ascent to the heavens.

This forest of obelisks thins out towards the centre, creating a clearing which acts almost like a cloister, giving students a calm space within the Garden of Memories where they can come and recharge their batteries in a tranquil setting, surrounded by the plays of light and shadow created by this protecting army.

It borders the park's new planted forests and marks the link between immortality and the life of the material cut from the park's trees.

The Earth Garden

This garden is unique: a small rocky valley with cracked earth where just 5 trees are planted. The valley gathers rainwater from the sky. A thin film of water surrounding the path that crosses the valley shows that the trees grow when the earth receives water.

This element is a meeting place: the earth symbolises the centre, the square, stability.

It is the central element that brings together all the others.

This garden is located on the same axis as the building. Its base – its platform – is made of the same material as the red table.

It continues the conceptual line formed by the project, integrating into the landscape.

Metal tubes emerge from the lake. Atop them sits a cup containing jewel-like pebbles from the stream and the river; water flows down gently from this source.

This bright and musical water garden resembles an organ emerging from the lake to pay tribute to the building.

The Metal Garden

Metal represents autumn. Like the Wood Garden, this one borders the park. It is formed of metal tubes supporting tubular bells that vibrate in the wind, creating a traditional sound that guards against evil spirits and gives this element of the Garden of Memories a poetic and musical dimension. A stepped path through the midst of this forest of metal allows visitors to immerse themselves in the music.

The Fire Garden

The Fire Garden falls at the end of the astrological cycle and is therefore located at the end of the composition, after the Earth Garden and just before the campus' vast promenade, where all the paths originating from the spacious covered esplanade converge towards a large lawn.

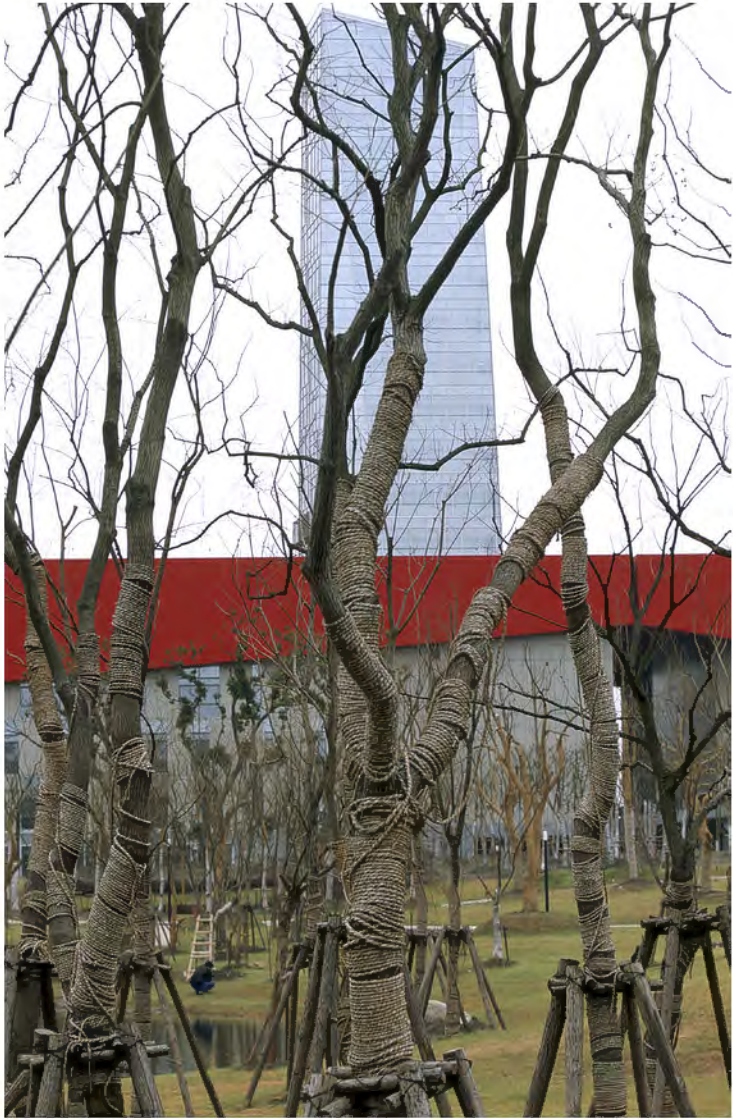
This Fire Garden consists of columns; at the foot of each lies a hearth illuminated by a red light. The columns trace out a winding path across a bed of smouldering pebbles representing the effervescence of fire and the rebirth of the rivers that sweep across China with its 9 symbolic meanders.

This Garden of Memory is a place that encourages mindfulness, reflection, communication and sharing.

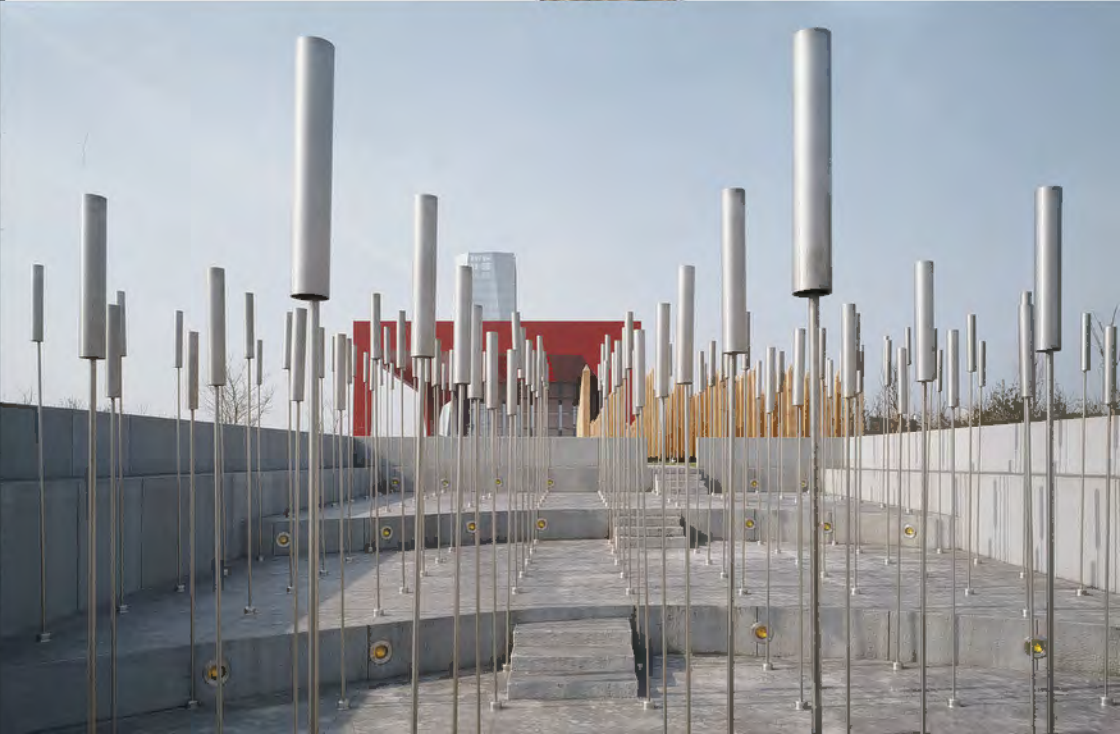
Using the traditional symbolism of the 5 elements, the garden also looks to the future and can be interpreted as the image of a printed circuit. Like a mandala, it grows in step with knowledge, gradually taking shape in the third dimension.

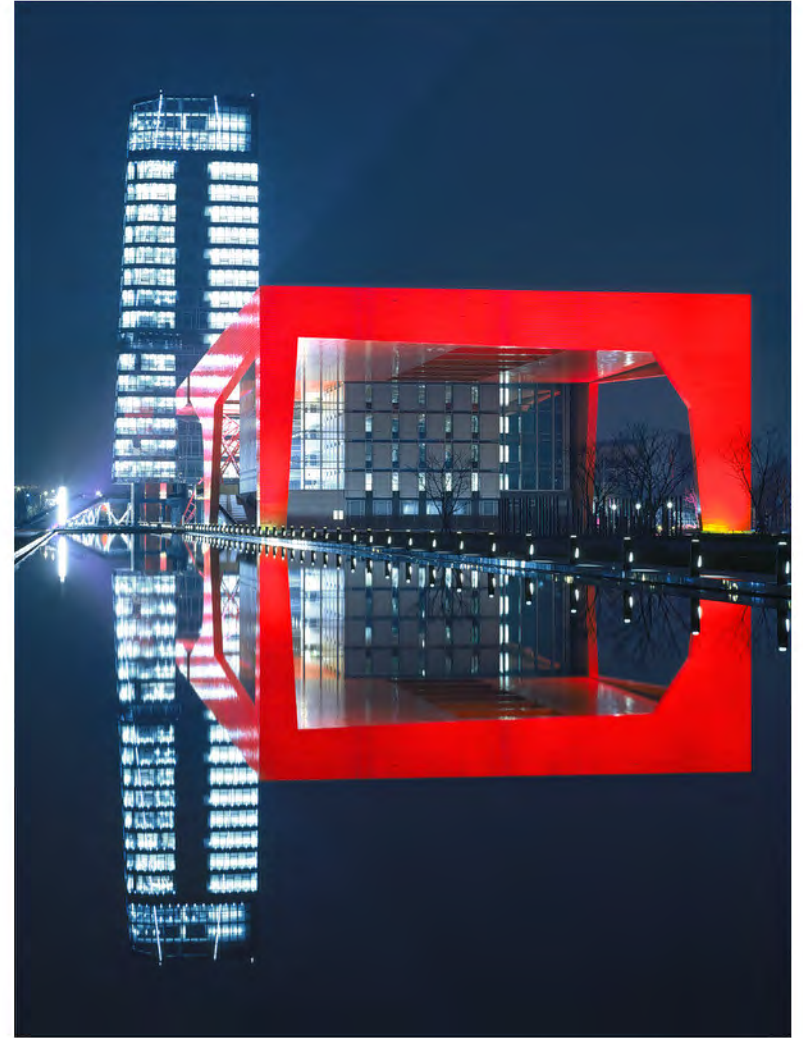
With its poetic, intimate and open appearance, this series of gardens delicately yet powerfully supports the process of education and knowledge transfer.













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