

## Finally, The Details

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I have been working in crossover cooperation with architects, designers and artists for a while now. Un-natural is a standout example of this cooperation. From the Urban Creation theme raised by the 2002 Shanghai Biennale, through MVRDV KM3: Proposals for Chinese Cities, Jian · Ge - Architecture and Art, City in Progress / Live from Zhang Jiang, to this year's green projects such as Shan Shui and Three Dimensional City · Future China, we have continued to uphold the principle of 'sustainable development of Chinese cities', so that contemporary art can be integrated into the urban development and drive forward social progress. Un-natural, a glad collaboration with Formica Co., Bing Bu and Tian Sun, curators, was actually a miniature attempt at that principle. Un-natural didn't seek to establish a 'Grand Narrative', but rather started from 'materials' and focused on furniture, courtyard, down to the single stone and grain of sand, not without certain profound intentions – a brand new discussion about ecology and the humanist tradition – exactly what Beijing Centre for the Arts have been taking on as its academic orientation all these years. No doubt this platform that combines a cultural persuasion with experimental spirit will prove meaningful.

The other day, one of my friends, a successful entrepreneur in the US, quoted best selling author Thomas Friedman's view in saying that China's establishment has limited its cultural innovations and makes it even harder for creative industries of international influence to develop. In other words, he was optimistic about the Chinese economy, but rather pessimistic about China's creativity. I disagree. As I see it, the Chinese draw upon thousands of years of cultural lineage that is filled with inexhaustible intrinsic power. I believe this 'wild growth' will give birth to a more powerful culture, precisely because struggle breeds innovation, when creation and rebellion go hand in hand.

Social sea changes are reflected by the material and spiritual outlooks revealed by urban transformation. A barbaric age that can only talk 'abstractly' about city and architecture has passed. Increasingly I feel that each industry is entering a new phase. To be more precise, a 'bottleneck', a juncture, faced with new issues – not money, or resources, technology, but culture. The gist of the issue is how we synthesize the historical heritage of the past, cultural assurance as well as the transforming life experience in the last two decades, and how to provoke a dialogue between history and present so that a choice would not betray bad taste – we need to know who we really are, and what we really want.

Meanwhile, every detail is ironed out, finally. A closer look at Un-natural reveals much effort, struggle and embarrassment on the creators' part that went into the critical juncture. We see that Yung Ho Chang's Thick Thin Fold, an irresistible piece, how it has an inherent understanding of the material, and connects the present to the past in a nuanced and deeply meaningful manner. We also see a few pieces that are lamentably lacking in practicality, or wastefully extravagant in their use of material, or predicated on a concept but without convincing details to back it up.

Quality, as the essence of creativity, is revealed in every single detail. Details of projects ranging from the design of a new administrative district, or a small industrial design invariably crystallize the commitment to quality, the artist's overall personality, life experience and cultural predilections. Impatience is the nemesis of detail. We have witnessed some artists' inability to stay focused and spare enough time for studying the material, space, function and ultimately conducting quality control by

themselves. As such, the experimental space runs the risk of downgrading itself to a showroom, and interdisciplinary practice would prove to be a false proposition. However, we have heard self-criticisms at the seminar. Only through self-criticism and reflection can we stay away from impatience, a malady of our time. Thereafter lies the possibility for us to breakthrough the bottleneck and welcome a new era that sees all walks of life working together towards an eruption of world leading creativity.