

## ENTRANCE

This *longtang* has more than 40 house numbers, marking buildings three stories high – a mode of organization quintessential to most French and British residences. These Western European influences entered China through its ports during the early 20th Century and later culminated into a distinctive, intercultural brand of dwellings that have been popular choices for Chinese and foreign families alike. However, the style has become impractical as both population densities and construction costs rose. Nowadays in Shanghai, one is much more likely to come across a 30-story apartment complex than these low-rise, antiquated compounds.

## EXTERIOR

In this *longtang*, 愚谷村 (Yugu Cun, pronounced yú gǔ cūn), exterior walls are made of bricks – but not just any run-of-the-mill clay bricks. What makes Yugu Cun's brick walls so special is that it has a seemingly primitive component: mud. During the masonry process, dirt is dug from the wheat fields and added to the brick mixture. The final, hardened product is powerful but fine to the touch, its material able to insulate in the winter and cool in the summer – checking the extreme weather of both seasons in the city is known for.

## SEATS

In Yugu Cun, small wooden stools are more commonplace than chairs. Always used during meal-times as well as after-dinner conversations in the living room or out on the porch, it is the symbol of *longtang* furniture – simplistic, undemanding, but dependable.

## FOOD STAMPS

Every year under the CCP, each family received only five meters of textile for clothes-making. Each individual was granted 300 grams of meat and 200 grams of oil to make their own food. One needed a ticket even to buy tofu.

## TOYS

Sandbags, shuttlecocks, hopscotch squares – these things are examples of how children passed their time back in the day, finding joy in the simplest of pleasures. Girls strung together hair-ties to create one long, makeshift jump-rope. Boys cast pinballs from slings. Childhood afternoons spent with playmates and kindred spirits are often a *longtang* resident's happiest, deepest-etched memories.



## "BEDS"

Along with chairs, beds were rare in a common longtang household during wartime and the early days of the nation. Instead, the residents slept on mats, which were cheaper, more compatible, and provided more cooling during Shanghai's long, hot summer months.

## LUXURIES

Before the '50s, many parts of China were lagging behind economically, languishing in inadequate living conditions with a lack of basic household commodities: landlines, gas, clicking light switches. During the war with Japan in the '30s and early '40s, correspondence across the country between family and friends was fear-stunted and scarce, and a bulk of the Chinese were too poor to afford anything more than food – for some, not even that. Instead of electric lights, the people used matches. Instead of socks, they resorted to adding thick padding to their shoes. Over the next decades, however, China would undergo forty years of colossal economic growth that would revolutionize Shanghai, from countryside to metropolis.



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## FLOORBOARDS

Inspired by elements of German and chiefly Northern European interior design, the floor panels are hollow on the first level. Underneath the living room lies a secret chamber, unbeknownst to most – exempting the families residing here, of course. This chamber gives into a passageway that leads to adjacent houses. In the heat of WWII, for instance, many Germans took advantage of this feature and hid Jewish fugitives in their basements, creating a secret network of liaisons and escape routes. In Yugu Cun, on the other hand, these subterranean paths served much lighter purposes, allowing the No. 37 resident an additional route to connect with friends in No. 36 and No. 38.

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## INTERIOR

*Longtang* interiors are historically built from easily accessible, durable hardwood. Originally utilized to efficiently erect new living spaces for an influx of migrants, hardwood is a vital component in all *longtang* chambers. This living area is no exception. The wood used in the rooms of Yugu Cun is relatively more expensive than that of other *longtangs*. Perhaps for this reason, it still holds well 70 years after its construction, not subjected to any decay, unrivaled in both sustainability and style.

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