



Balusters displaying gradations of blue and golden beige define the winding staircase, which connects WeWork's three levels.



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WORK

03 — Everyone's WORKING TOGETHER, everywhere

Courtesy of Linehouse, old and new work in tandem to provide shared office space for WeWork in Shanghai.

SHANGHAI – In February WeWork opened its Chinese headquarters in a monument-listed building – originally an opium factory – near the northern edge of the former French Concession, an upmarket area of Shanghai. Now refurbished, the building chosen for WeWork's Chinese flagship is an impressive example of how to mix history with contemporary design to create a space with the dignity and grandeur of an opera-house lobby. The honours go to local studio Linehouse, which employed a colourful symphony of balusters to strengthen visual interaction among the various tenants. Dominating the 'lobby' is a staircase of green-painted steel that connects all three levels of the building. The winding balustrade's oak-clad interior walls contrast with the exterior surfaces, which display gradations of blue and golden beige.

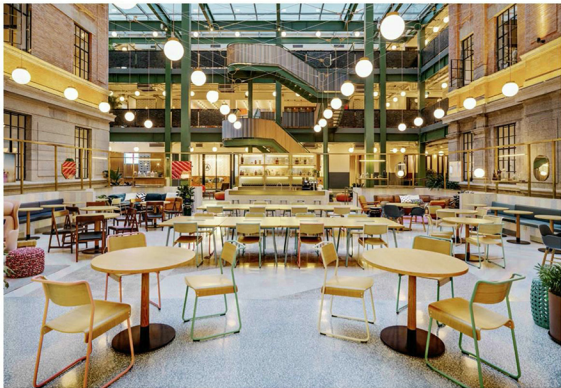
As the country's financial centre, Shanghai has the most floor area used for offices and the highest concentration of companies in China. In central locations, rents are considerably higher than those in most other megacities. To stimulate start-ups and small businesses, the government has supported the transformation of many old industrial sites into 'creative factories', especially during

the last eight years. Co-working facilities, often distinguished by hip design, are the next step in this scheme. Invariably situated in renovated or abandoned buildings, they function as incubators intended to revitalize a part of the city.

WeWork is obviously not the first provider of co-working space in China. Countless Chinese competitors are vying for the same tenants, using business models based on the success of WeWork's model. WeWork's Chinese counterparts offer cheaper rents and have a better understanding of specific contexts and conditions. Their presence poses a challenge for the American newcomer. Uber, for instance, wasn't able to compete with its Chinese rivals.

For many Chinese users, the Western image attached to co-working is an important factor. A big difference between WeWork and its Chinese peers – currently over 16,000 – is the relatively large number of start-ups housed by the latter. Some companies even use the address without occupying the premises. Two of the bigger Chinese co-working providers are UrWork and Naked Hub, both strongly influenced by WeWork's model. – HdH

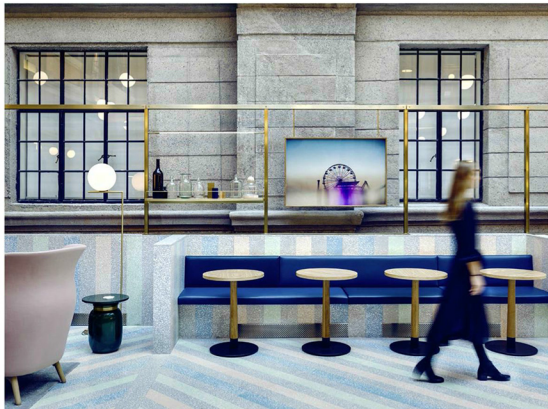
linehousedesign.com



Local outfit Linehouse sought to give WeWork Shanghai the atmosphere of a grand hotel.







The co-working space is housed in a monumental-listed building, which was originally an opium factory.

The WeWork Way

Founded in 2010 in New York City, WeWork aimed for the number-one position in co-working spaces worldwide, with shared offices in every major city. China's Legend Holdings Corporation is one of WeWork's main investors. In July 2016, WeWork opened its first Shanghai facility and rented every space in less than two months. There are now five WeWork complexes in Shanghai, as well as locations in Beijing and Hong Kong. More are on the way.

wework.com

A mix of history and contemporary design gives the space the elegance of an opera lobby