





1. The internal atrium is the epicentre of the building that melds old and new

2. A variety of seating types in the internal atrium allows for informal discussions, hot-desking and chance meetings

PLAY AT WORK

Shanghai has an exuberant new co-work venue: a collaboration between Linehouse and the WeWork in-house design team, WeWork Weihai Lu melds history with modernity, opulence with tactility, and fiction with function.

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Along Shanghai's Weihai Lu sits an industrial brick building, surrounded by 'longtangs' (traditional lane houses). Its aged demeanour belies an exciting, new function, as suggested by the words 'Creatives Welcome' scribbled in neon light on the historical Chinese stone arches above the entryway. This is the location of WeWork Weihai Lu, the China flagship of American co-work space and service provider WeWork.

Started in 2010 in New York City, WeWork has more than 100,000 members spread across 130 locations worldwide. Their success is reflective of the workspace sharing practice, now a common and necessary industry model for freelance

workers, small creative industries, entrepreneurs and start-up companies fuelled by today's mobile technology and culture.

WeWork is known for picking heritage spaces and transforming them into attractive collaborative work environments. "WeWork loves the charm and characteristics of older buildings. Our design approach is to find ways to bring the building to life, let it be what it is and show off the way it was constructed rather than hiding it behind finishes or with heavy handed interventions," says Ashley Couch, Senior Associate, Director of Interior Design at WeWork.

Their Shanghai branch has an interesting past as a warehouse for the East India Company, artist studios and

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galleries, and an opium storage facility in the 1930s. In response, the design team took a page from the city's 1920/1930s belle époque period when fashion and architecture embraced a mix of Eastern and Western influences.

The result is a delightful melody of colour, forms and patterns, creating an engaging setting that well suits the WeWork branding and synergy. It is a collaboration between Shanghai-based architecture and design studio Linehouse, helmed by Briar Hickling and Alex Mok, and WeWork's in-house design team, with the former focusing on the design of the public areas and the latter on the private offices.

WORKING SPACES

Past the aforementioned stone gateway, an old laneway washed in pink paint leads to the reception area. This sits in an in-between

zone where the original brick structure meets a layer of industrial additions made over the years. Playing with the narrative of a grand hotel "to transport guests and members on an unexpected journey of whimsy, voyeurism and festivity", the words 'Ring for Service' flash behind the wood panelling and concrete counter, against a blue cabinet of curiosities.

Surrounding it is a bronze metal structure that hangs lights and creates leaners. This bronze frame is used throughout the building as a multipurpose element – casual space divider when fixed with etched glass for the creation of semi-private meeting areas, and holder of lighting fixtures, shelving and artwork. Its materiality injects a dose of opulence, contributing to the narrative.

This zesty reception hints at what lies ahead – an equally cheerful mise-en-scène in the central atrium. Covered by a



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**Briar Hickling,
Linehouse**

"The interweaving form of the stair inhabits the void of the atrium and as you meander around, up and down the staircase and around the surrounding space, one's perspective of the staircase is always changing"

3. A dynamic ivy green shade colours an existing steel structure and new staircase and bridges

4. Alex Mok and Briar Hickling of Linehouse, who worked on the project with WeWork's in-house design team



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previously added skylight, here is the epicentre of activity that exudes an indoor-outdoor feel as accentuated by potted plants. It is designed for a host of functions – informal meetings, chance and planned interactivity, event hosting, hot-desking – facilitated by a bar and the relaxed layout of furniture in little islands. An assortment of private and semi-private spaces – phone booths, conversation rooms designed to be as living rooms for informal meetings, larger conference rooms – housed in the surrounding brick building look into this central space.

A curved terrazzo parapet wall, composed of diagonal pastel stripes of varying colour, extends onto the floor as a “hardscape carpet”. Comments Hickling: “There was an opportunity to play with the materiality, like brass fixtures, heritage wood panelling, etched glass partitions and terrazzo tiling, to help us define areas of programming without building actual walls or partitions in the central atrium and main areas of activity.”

The terrazzo is but one of the materials referencing the past but modernised in a graphical way. Similarly, large-scale, hand painted poppy wallpaper with exploding, golden pollen in the pantries recall

the building’s history with opium. Embracing a “tropical-retro-oriental parlour” theme, the back bar area is wrapped with gold-tinted wallpaper onto which graces Shanghai ladies in short, wavy hair, updated in zebra-print cheongsams and gangster bling.

Above the triple-height atrium hangs a custom-designed bronze lighting fixture doubling as decorative element. It suspends from the brick building so as to minimise any impact on the heritage walls.

“The light is made from pink and grey cabling, which traverses through the void and is threaded through circular bronze rings that hang custom glass shades. Different perspectives of the light installation are experienced as one [moves] from level one to level three on the atrium staircase,” describes Hickling. It is designed, she adds, to lend an air of festivity to the atrium both in the day and night whenever events are held.

COLOUR CODED

Around the atrium, the existing handrail was removed and replaced with a new black metal and black-stained OSB handrail

5. The new staircase presents many interesting lines of sight that is invigorating for members while also facilitating communication



6. A bronze frame is a consistent leitmotif throughout that functions as informal space divider, shelf and holder of lighting fixtures

7. The traditional entryway of WeWork Weihai Lu exudes a modern, rock-and-roll vibe that hints at the company's energetic synergy

8. Bright green neon lights accentuate a lively and vibrant spirit, harkening to the heritage building's past

9. A custom-designed lighting-cum-decoration feature enlivens the atrium space and makes it apt for hosting events both in the day and night



WEWORK WEIHAI LU

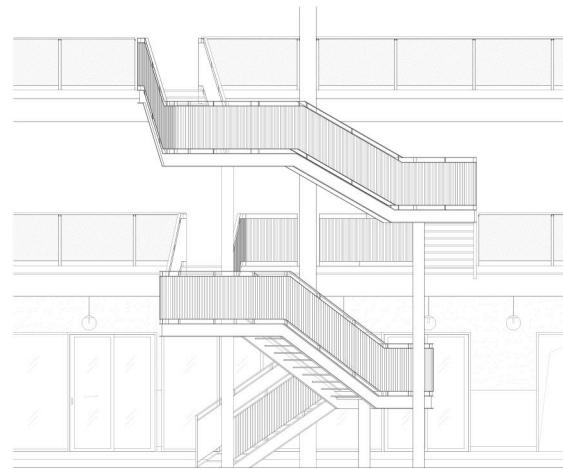
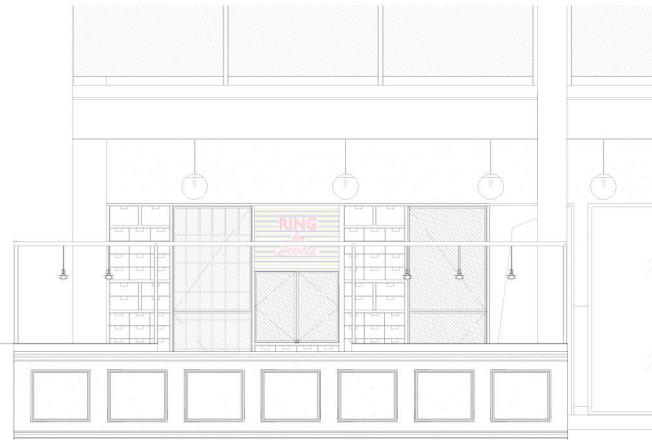
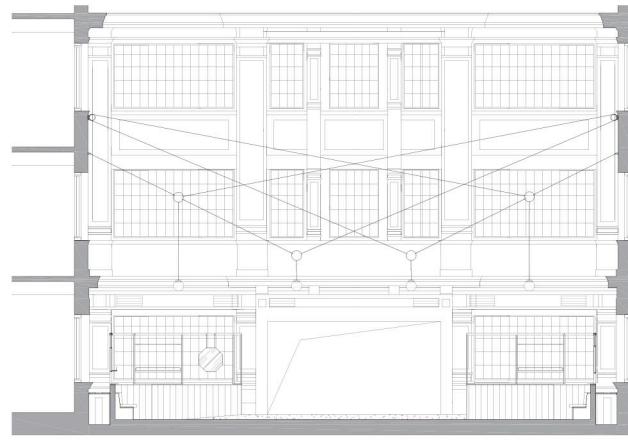
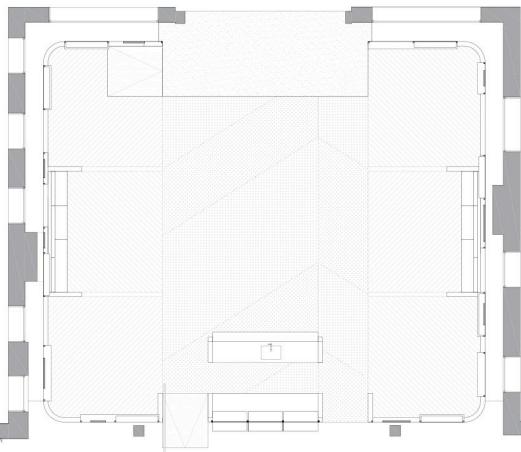
LOCATION / SHANGHAI, CHINA

GROSS FLOOR AREA (GFA) / 5,500 M²

COMPLETION / 2016

ARCHITECT / LINEHOUSE

INTERIOR DESIGN / LINEHOUSE & WEWORK IN-HOUSE DESIGN TEAM



10. A zesty, striped pattern made with terrazzo defines the flooring and parapets in the atrium

leaner. Ivy green is a dominant colour, painted on the existing steel structure – one of the industrial elements added over the years – as well as a new staircase and two bridges that connect the offices and communal areas horizontally and vertically.

“The existing steel was a drab, grey colour; we painted it ivy green to create a more festive atmosphere, and it works well with the palette of the red bricks of the heritage façade,” reveals Hickling on the colour scheme.

The sculptural, new steel staircase is a highlight within the atrium space, providing a multifaceted experience. 16 variations of blue used to create the gradient effect attests to the amount of detail paid to the design.

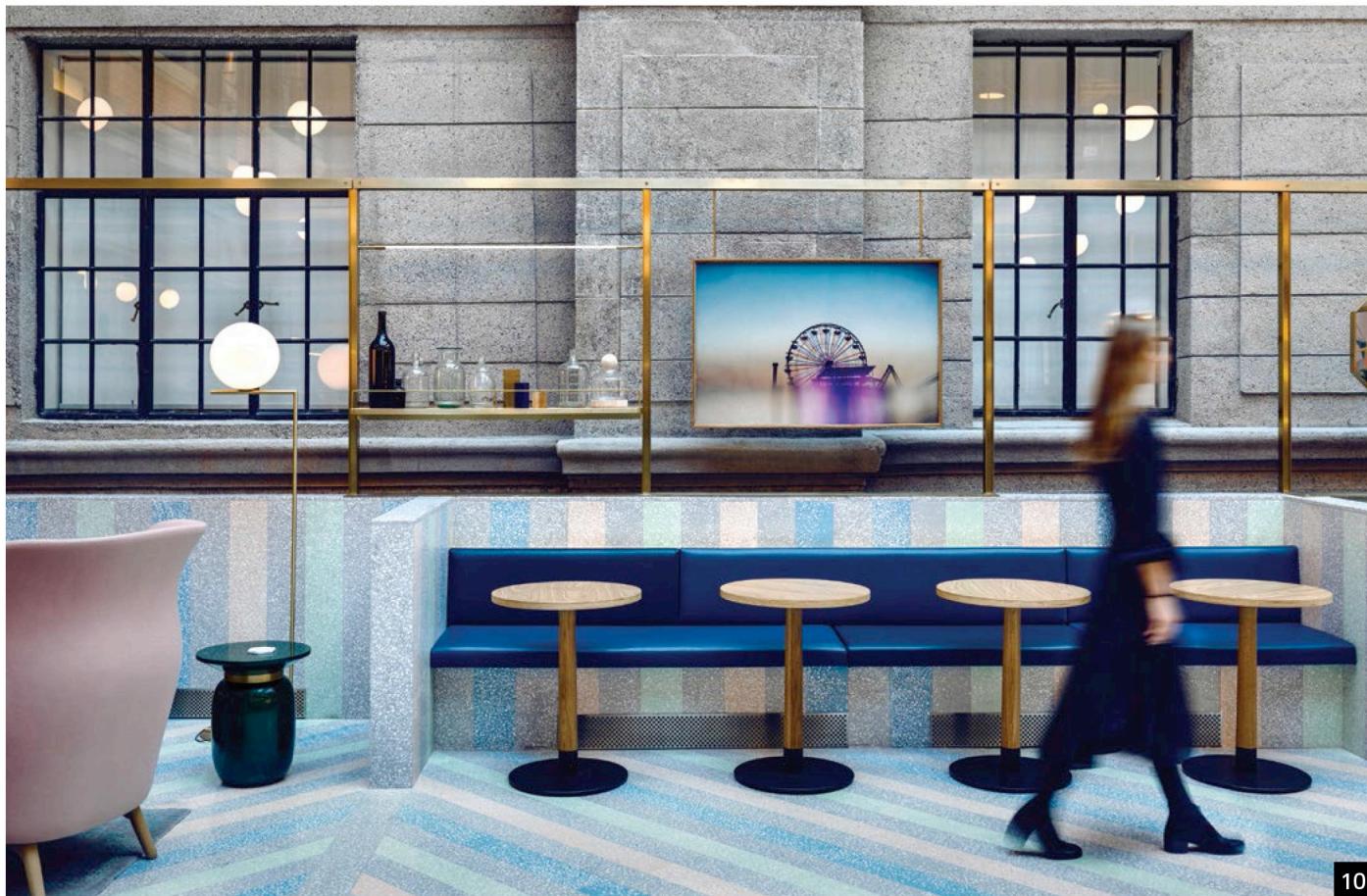
“This is clad in triangular pieces of oak wood, with one side painted in hues of blue. The colours alternate as you travel up the stair, creating a gradient of tones, and shifting views from wood to blue. The interweaving form of the stair inhabits the void of the atrium and as you meander around, up and down the staircase and around the surrounding space, one’s perspective of the staircase is always changing,” says Hickling.

11. Bright colours merge with neutral and materials of leather and wood that lend the atrium a feeling of visual and textural interest

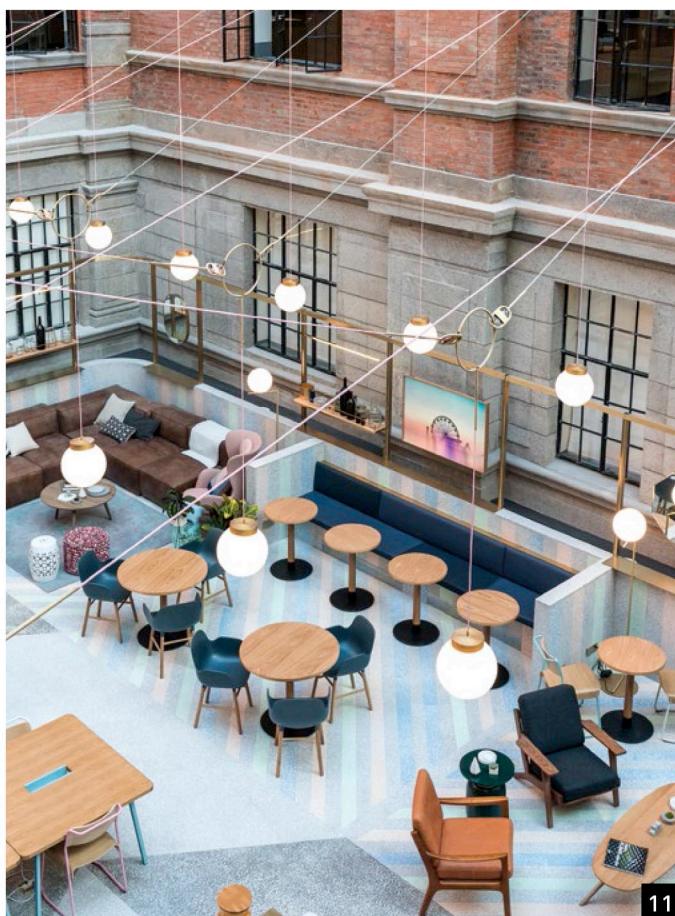
The designers have left no stone unturned in the design project, down to even utilitarian spaces such as bathrooms. custom-printed pink and green tiles with interconnecting and shapes clad the walls, ceilings are painted a dusty pink mint-green lacquered box contains the cubicles. The use of b

continues here with custom-designed light fixtures and m above the washbasins that create a parlour-like vanity exper WeWork Weihai Lu demonstrates how far the works sharing template has come. From the minimal provision of desks and photocopier machine in a corner, the respons now is for providers to create a total environment conducive just for lone work but also for the fertilisation of collaborative community building. This is what the designers have done and more: the conversation between the old structure and new elements, and brilliant use of colour, graphics, form and material throughout presents an excellent foil for creativity and inspiration. The seamless way at which both Linehouse and WeWork house design team has come together in partnership is an appropriate testimony to WeWork’s collaborative culture.

12. The bathrooms feature a similar graphical language for both the surfaces and fixtures that lend a harmonious, thoughtful feel to the entire project



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