

Büro Ole Scheeren

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A fusion of time and a synthesis of China's rich cultural history:

Büro Ole Scheeren unveils design for Guardian Art Center in Beijing

Located in close proximity to the Forbidden City, construction is underway on the new headquarters of China's oldest art auction house. Embedded in the historic fabric of central Beijing, the building will form a new hybrid institution between museum, event space, and cultural lifestyle center.



Ole Scheeren's design for the Guardian Art Center carefully inscribes the building into the surrounding context, in a sensitive architectural interpretation that fuses history and tradition with a contemporary vision for the future of a cultural art space. The 'pixelated' volumes of the lower portion of the building subtly refer to the adjacent historic urban fabric, echoing the grain, color and intricate scale of Beijing's *hutongs*, while the upper portion of the building responds to the larger scale of the surrounding contemporary city. This floating 'ring' forms an inner courtyard to the building and further resonates with the prevalent typology of the courtyard houses in Beijing.

"The Art Center will be a tangible link between past, present, and future. It celebrates history and tradition while also representing an important social and civic amenity for the capital" says China Guardian's Chairman and Founder, Chen Dongsheng.

"The design of the building shares its qualities with those of Guardian. It is profound, simple, and clean, and exudes a sense of stability and trustworthiness" adds Mr. Chen. "Ole Scheeren's work is rooted in culture and history; it reflects the culture of the site and the culture and customs of the Chinese people. He merges all these elements in his creation, endowing architecture with its social life and meaning."

Büro Ole Scheeren



“I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to design this Art Center, which allows me to pay tribute to a country and city where I have now worked for over a decade” Ole Scheeren says. “The building is located at a historic site that holds special significance to China, at an intersection of two streets, and two worlds: Beijing’s most famous commercial street

Wangfujing and Wusi Dajie, the site where the New Cultural Movement originated after the Qing Dynasty. It explicitly pays respect to its context and location but also comes to embody the nature of an auction house at the intersection of culture and commerce.”

“After four years of meticulous work and intensive collaboration with the Beijing planning authorities and experts, our client, and Chinese partner architects at BIAD, we are proud to have accomplished a true integration of Chinese identity and contemporary architecture and see the project under construction.”

The Guardian Art Center represents a new hybrid concept for a cultural institution that transcends the traditional functions of an auction house. Merging the display and presentation of art in its museum spaces with the multifunctional capacities of its exhibition and auction rooms allows virtually any type of usage and event to take place. The seamless integration of several restaurants and a 120-room hotel in the floating ring of the building with views to the Forbidden City creates an encompassing lifestyle concept centered on the experience of art and culture. Through the addition of educational facilities in its central ‘club tower’ and art conservation departments in its basements, the Guardian Art Center further manifests its position as the world’s first custom-designed auction house headquarters and a new hybrid art space.



At the center of the building, a 1,700 square meter column-free exhibition and event space allows for maximum flexibility and versatility, while the surrounding matrix of smaller, interconnected rooms of the architectural pixels serve support functions. Two large auction halls in the basement provide a more specific and formal setting, with expansive exhibition areas on the second floor completing the typological variety of spaces of the Art Center.

The building’s facades take on a specific role in its cultural expression and Chinese integration: The upper ring of the hotel is made of floating, over-sized glass bricks, resonating with the textures of the adjacent hutongs and courtyard houses. In contrast to the imperial motives of the nearby Forbidden City, the brick represents civil society and values – a humble and non-elitist symbol in Chinese culture. The grey stone-like pixels of the lower portion of the building are perforated by several thousand circular openings – generated by projecting one of China’s

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most important historic landscape paintings, Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains, onto its facades and thereby creating a subtle light filter through an abstracted landscape silhouette.

“Through the subtle manipulation of scale and form, as well as the abstracted integration of Chinese elements and materiality, Ole Scheeren’s design has created a renewed harmony between the old and the contemporary” says Zhang Yu, BIAD’s chief architect. “The understated monumentality of the building reflects Beijing’s grand yet deeply cultural character.”

Commissioned in early 2011 and due to open in 2016, the Guardian Art Center further expands Büro Ole Scheeren’s growing international portfolio. The practice is working on a range of city-defining structures and cultural projects, ranging from large-scale urban developments in several of Asia’s capitals to more intimate spaces, with Mahanakhon, soon to be Bangkok’s tallest tower, and the mixed-use development DUO in Singapore currently under construction.



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