

# mabuhay

September 2017

## SHANGHAI BY DESIGN

Cross-cultural architect  
Lyndon Neri eats, drinks and  
finds inspiration in China's  
creative capital



Meerkats and raccoons  
await in Seoul's cafés

Amy Besa reclaims the  
Philippine culinary narrative

Groove to Brisbane's  
pulsating music scene

Manila's last-standing  
Art Deco buildings



GOING GLOBAL

# Shanghai

Chinese-Filipino architect Lyndon Neri, one half of multi-disciplinary design firm Neri&Hu, has been set up in Shanghai for 13 years now. Best known for his retail concept Design Republic, Lyndon's perfect Shanghai weekend is likewise fine-tuned to perfection, encompassing art galleries, international food and some well-deserved downtime

As told to **Crystal Wilde**  
Photography **Ambrous Young**





I'm a bit of a mix of cultures. I was born to Chinese parents in Ozamiz City – in the Philippine province of Misamis Occidental – and raised by my grandmother in Cebu City. I eventually went to the United States to earn my undergraduate degree from the University of California, Berkeley, before I completed a graduate program at Harvard University. It was in California that I met my soon-to-be wife and business partner, Rossana Hu.

I first came to Shanghai in 2004, on a six-week placement with the late American architect Michael Graves' company. The firm is responsible for Three on the Bund, now one of Shanghai's most iconic lifestyle destinations.

For many outsiders at the time, China was a strange and forbidding place. But for me it was like being surrounded by a bunch of family members. People walked around in silk pajamas, silk socks and slippers. Anyone else would have thought it the weirdest of fashion faux pas, but for me, it seemed perfectly normal!

My tenure was extended and I ended up staying in Shanghai for around a year, after which I went back to the US to hand in my resignation. It had become very apparent to me that the rest of the world saw Asians as people who work hard but generally copy others' ideas. Apart from some Japanese architects, very few Asians had made it onto the world stage and were having their ideas taken seriously. I wanted to change that.

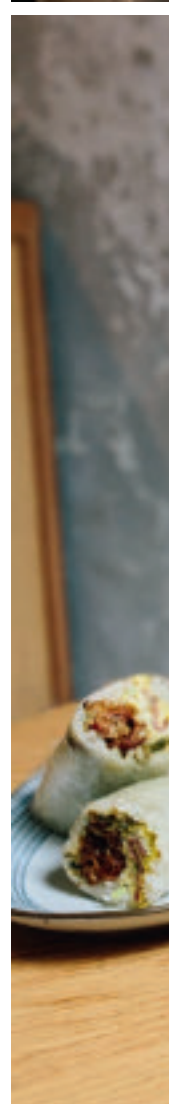
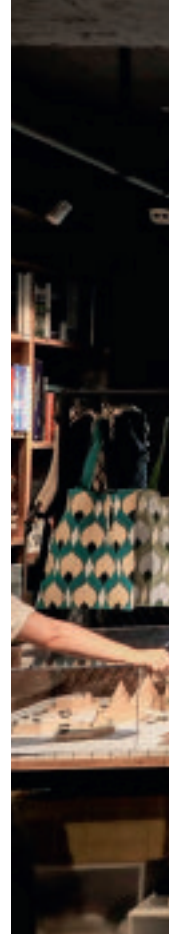
After moving permanently to Shanghai with Rossana in 2004 without any sort of strategic plan, we began by setting up



our first company, Design Republic, making small products and furniture pieces. Later that year, we launched our architecture firm, Neri&Hu.

People often say our work and designs have a very Asian sensibility, but this is not something we have consciously pursued. A lot of the things I do, both socially and culturally, aren't exactly very Asian. Having been raised in the Philippines, I can dance with the best of them and my body language is very Spanish. The Philippines gave me what I call the *labumba* – the passion, the friendliness and the hospitality; my Chinese side brings out the discipline and the rigor to finish what I've started; and my American background helps me look at the big picture on a global scale.

Similarly, I see Shanghai as an amalgamation of different cultural sensibilities coming to fruition in one city. There are so many unique and creative people here and the energy is one that allows for experimentation. It just feels right in this city and, honestly, I don't know if I'll ever leave.





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**SATURDAY****10AM**

I start the day by popping into some boutiques before they get busy. I'm not a mall person, but I do have some local designers I try to keep up with. **Uma Wang** is a friend but I genuinely love the very simple, clean lines of her designs. On the surface, her clothes can look quite plain, but it's all about the details. Since I'm still in the mood for more retail therapy after dropping by her store, I browse the shelves at **1 The Mix Place** on Hengshan Road, a bookstore, café and chill-out zone all in one.

**11.30AM**

For Saturday brunch, I head to **2 The Commune Social** in Jingan District. It's a Spanish tapas place that's frequented by both expats and the local Chinese community. There's a great mix of people plus a range of vibes to suit different occasions, as it has a courtyard, a dining area, a dessert bar and a cocktail bar. Neri&Hu designed the interior and the menu is by chef Jason Atherton. My favorite dishes here are the rather unhealthy, but delicious, choices of calamari and rosemary fries.

**1PM**

I'm feeling the need for some architectural inspiration, so I take a wander around the city's lane houses, known as *lilong*. These intrinsically Shanghainese houses are perhaps the most distinctive feature of the city's architectural heritage. Designed at the turn of the century for just one family,

**CITY GUIDE****Saturday**

**Uma Wang**  
 299 Fuxing Xi Road,  
 Xuhui District  
[umawang.com](http://umawang.com)

**The Mix Place**  
 880 Hengshan Road,  
 Xuhui District

**The Commune Social**  
 511 Jiangning Road,  
 Jingan District  
[communesocial.com](http://communesocial.com)

**Old Jesse**  
 41 Tianping Road,  
 Xuhui District

**Seesaw Coffee**  
 433 Yuyuan Road,  
 Jingan District  
[seesawcoffee.com](http://seesawcoffee.com)

**Jean-Georges**  
 Three on the Bund,  
 3 Zhongshan East 1st  
 Road, Huangpu District  
[jean-georges.com](http://jean-georges.com)

**Lei Garden**  
 4/F IAPM Mall,  
 999 Middle Huaihai  
 Road, Xuhui District  
[leigarden.hk](http://leigarden.hk)

**The Waterhouse  
 at South Bund**  
 1-3 Maojiayuan Road,  
 Huangpu District  
[waterhouse  
 shanghai.com](http://waterhouse<br/>
  shanghai.com)



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they've become much more intensely populated since the Cultural Revolution. Many have also been turned into shops and restaurants.

**2.30PM**

**Old Jesse** on Tianping Road is one of my favorite spots for lunch. There are a lot of Old Jesses littered throughout Shanghai, but this one's particularly hard to get a seat at unless you're ready to bribe the owner! It's a small hole-in-the-wall restaurant serving typical Shanghainese food and just around the corner from our office, so Rossana and I come here a lot. I'm completely addicted to the roasted fish head, crabmeat and vermicelli dishes.

**4.30PM**

I love nothing more than hanging out at home in the French Concession on a Saturday afternoon. Sometimes I'll go



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### Lyndon on Design Republic

"The bulk of what we sell here is imported furniture, but there's also a fair amount of local and China-made products. It's all curated in a way that defies the typical retail concept of maximizing displays as much as possible.

Instead, there's a mixture of old and new, as well as the space to appreciate things, which is something you don't normally see in other Shanghai concepts. Housed in a gorgeous brick building that used to be the English Police Station, there's also a lot of history here."

swimming, but if I get to read or draw in the garden, I'm a happy camper. Drawing has always been my outlet since I was young. Whether I'm happy or sad, you can see it in my sketches. For an afternoon pick-me-up, I go to **Seesaw Coffee**. It's near my house and serves great coffee and pastries.

#### 8PM

A good Saturday night dinner spot is **Jean-Georges**, chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten's French restaurant from New York. My order here is always the same: sirloin steak, medium-rare. If I'm not in the mood for steak, I go to **Lei Garden**, a solid Cantonese restaurant with a Michelin star under its belt.

#### 10PM

I do drink, but as an architect there are a lot of late hours so it's hard to find the time to go to bars. If I'm lucky, on a Saturday night I might grab a nice glass of red on the rooftop terrace bar of **The Waterhouse at South Bund** hotel. The views of The Bund are pretty unbeatable.

#### SUNDAY

##### 7.30AM

On Sundays, I like to get up early and spend some time indulging in a good traditional Chinese breakfast. I'm a big fan of **Taoyuan Village**, a chain that specializes in Chinese- and Taiwanese-style food. The *you tiao* (fried dough sticks) and soya bean milk is my standard order. I'll usually get takeout from the Jingan branch and bring it home to share with the family.

##### 11AM

Every Sunday, my family and I attend the 11am service at a bilingual church in Hong Qiao, about 20 minutes west of the city. There are a lot of families and different nationalities here; a multigenerational and multicultural group that comes together to worship. There are usually more than 1,000 people at the service.

##### 1PM

**Imperial Treasure** is one of my favorite places for Sunday lunch. It's a Chinese restaurant with two Michelin stars, which isn't something I really care about, but this place is special. The dim sum and the suckling pig are to die for. If I'm not eating out, a few of my top spots in the





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city for picking up groceries are **My Butchery** for meat, **Avocado Lady** for assorted groceries and **Green & Safe** on Dongping Road for specialty produce, especially their selection of salads.

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**2.30PM**

For catching up socially with other designers, there's no better place than our other company, **Design Republic** – and I don't think I'm being too biased! The three-floor building in Xuhui District is highly curated and feels more education- than retail-focused, kind of like a museum. We invite lots of different artists and architects to host shows and lectures here, so there's always someone interesting to talk or listen to.

**6PM**

There are a couple of great art galleries in Shanghai that I go to whenever I can. **The Power Station of Art**, commonly

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**LYNDON'S FAVORITE LOCAL DESIGN SHOPS**

From clothes to souvenirs, there's a healthy band of local designers and stores that Lyndon likes to peruse on the weekends

**Comme Moi**

This label was created by designer and former supermodel Lu Yan. Neri&Hu designed the brand's shop at the Donghu Hotel. "Comme Moi is young, vibrant and affordable," Lyndon adds.

**Uma Wang**

Founded in 2009, Uma Wang is one of the leaders of Shanghai's design pack. "I feel her collections are within the spirit of Yohji Yamamoto: non-fussy and often in black," Lyndon says.

**Dongliang**

"This is a beautiful, small store set in a 1930s townhouse," Lyndon says. "It's always stocked with local Chinese brands, so it's perfect for tourists looking for classy souvenirs."

**Zhang Da**

"I like how he experiments with lines and fabric," Lyndon says. "I wouldn't necessarily be able to wear his stuff myself, but if you're six-feet-tall, very fit and very good-looking, it's perfect."

IMAGES: COMME MOI (SIDEBAR)





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**CITY GUIDE**  
**Sunday**

**Taoyuan Village**  
405 Taizhou Road,  
Jingan District

**Imperial Treasure**  
Yi Feng Gallery, 99  
East Beijing Road,  
Huangpu District  
[imperialtreasure.com](http://imperialtreasure.com)

**My Butchery**  
315 Wulumuqi Middle  
Road, Xuhui District

**Avocado Lady**  
274 Wulumuqi Middle  
Road, Xuhui District

**Green & Safe**  
6 Dongping Road,  
Xuhui District

**Design Republic**  
88 Yuqing Road,  
Xuhui District

**The Power  
Station of Art**  
200 Huayuqiang  
Road, Huangpu  
District

**Long Museum**  
Lane 3398 Longteng  
Avenue, Xuhui District

**A Niang Noodles**  
36 Sinan Road,  
Huangpu District

**Mercato**  
Three on the Bund,  
3 Zhongshan East  
1st Road, Huangpu  
District  
[mercato-international.com](http://mercato-international.com)

**Goga**  
1 Yueyang Road,  
Xihui District  
[gogarestaurants.com](http://gogarestaurants.com)

known as PSA, is a huge warehouse space on Huayuqiang Road that's similar in its contents and ambitions to Tate Modern in London. **7 Long Museum** in the revitalized West Bund area is also fabulous. It's a private museum, thought to be the largest in Shanghai, founded by Chinese couple Liu Yiqian and Wang Wei and designed by local firm Atelier Deshaus. The collection here spans traditional, modern and contemporary Chinese art.

**8PM**

For a quick and easy dinner before heading home, I call in at **8 A Niang Noodles**. It's always absolutely packed but if you don't mind the line and the no-fuss surroundings, it serves some of the best noodles in town. They offer about eight different toppings ranging from crab roe to minced pork and preserved vegetables – they're all delicious, so you really can't go wrong.

If I'm hankering after something slightly more upmarket, I'll head over to **9 10 Mercato** on The Bund – another one of Vongerichten's great establishments – for truffle pizza and kingfish sashimi, or **11 Goga** on Yueyang Road for their California salad, mussels and glazed yakitori pork.

**9PM**

On most Sunday evenings, I can be found at home, reading and relaxing with the family. My work keeps me really busy, so downtime is extremely important.



**PAL flies between Manila and Shanghai daily.**

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