

HOUSED IN TRADITION: Reviving History Through Architecture

In our "Housed in Tradition" series, Qi Jie speaks with architect Zhang Yue about preserving and repurposing historical buildings.

BEIJING, CHINA, December 27, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In a city where ancient traditions coexist with rapid modernization, architects like Zhang Yue are working to ensure that Beijing's [historical buildings](#) remain relevant in a changing world. With over 25 years of experience, Zhang has spearheaded numerous restoration projects, blending conservation with practicality. The highly acclaimed Chinese painter Qi Baishi died in 1957 at the age of 94. He lived for a while in this building, now a memorial hall, which has withstood the test of time and is a typical quadrangle residential building constructed in the middle of the Qing Dynasty, about 250 years ago. Located in the Yu'er Hutong in downtown Beijing, it is not a very big structure, but in its simplicity and elegance is a sense of tranquility. Zhang said the way in which it has been restored hews closely to the four principles proposed by UNESCO: authenticity, minimal intervention, recognizability and reversibility.

Zhang, an architect at the Beijing Traditional Chinese Architectural Design & Research Institute, has spent decades exploring Beijing's ancient alleys and buildings. Her work has imbued her with a deep appreciation for the complexity and beauty of traditional Chinese architecture, which she describes as a journey through layers of history and culture.

One notable example of her philosophy is a repurposed traditional courtyard house in Nanluoguxiang. It now serves as "HelloReading," a children's reading studio. The design preserves the courtyard's historical features while creating a tranquil space for learning. Zhang explained that the project is about more than just architecture. "It's a place where children can connect with both nature and history, experiencing the values of tradition alongside modernity," she said.

For Sarah Hu, an event organizer at "HelloReading," the space offers kids a unique experience. The quiet courtyard provides children with a sense of being grounded in nature, which is rare in today's urban environment. Here, they can feel the changes in the weather and connect with nature.

As Beijing continues to grow, the city faces the challenge of balancing urban development with the preservation of its heritage. Architects like Zhang Yue play a crucial role in ensuring that the

city's historical buildings are not only protected but also adapted to serve contemporary needs.

The Vibe

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