

Prada Rong Zhai, a historic mansion in central Shanghai reimagined as a flexible site for cultural activities, to open to the public.

On October 17, 2017, Prada opens Prada Rong Zhai, a meticulously restored historic early twentieth-century mansion in central Shanghai. Designed for the distinguished family of Yung Tsoong-King a century ago, Rong Zhai is one of Shanghai's finest Western-style garden villas. In 2011, Milan-based global fashion brand Prada began working with renovation specialist Architect Roberto Baciocchi on an epic revival of the stunning home. The result is as an emblem of Miuccia Prada and Patrizio Bertelli's admiration of Chinese aesthetic heritage and a deep commitment to the city of Shanghai. The mansion serves as a unique site for the company's diverse activities in China. Prada has extensive experience in rigorous historic preservation projects around the world, including the renovation of sections of the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, the grand nineteenth-century shopping arcade in Milan, and palazzo Ca' Corner della Regina, an opulent baroque-era palace on the Grand Canal in Venice reconfigured as an art space. The restoration of Rong Zhai combines that experience in historic building, an abiding belief in the value of traditional craftsmanship, and a dynamic collaboration between Western architects and Chinese scholars and artisans. The result is a true hybrid: a dialogue between Milan and Shanghai that stands as a testament to the family that commissioned it, the numerous architects and artists who shaped it, and the teams of Chinese and Italian specialists who brought it back to its rightful grandeur.

The restoration campaign aimed to both repair damage and reinstate the historic appearance of the building's interiors and exterior, while also making necessary structural reinforcements and functional updates. A team of Italian and Chinese specialist craftsmen was hand-selected to undertake the conservation of the building's many ornamental and structural elements, including plasterwork, wooden paneling, stained glass, and multiple types of decorative tile. Whenever possible, fabrication and installation techniques were modeled on the traditional methods and materials utilized by the craftsmen who originally built Rong Zhai over a century ago. Deemed a Jing'an district cultural relic in 2004 and designated one of Shanghai's remarkable historic buildings in 2005, Prada Rong Zhai is now opened to the public through a preservation effort rooted in a reverence for detail and handcraft, and the enduring relevance of historic architecture.

Prada Rong Zhai opens to the public from October 17 to November 12, 2017. On display now is an exhibition showcasing the villa restoration process as well as some of Prada's past architectural explorations, including the restorations of Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan and Ca' Corner della Regina in Venice overseen by Architect Roberto Baciocchi, and Epicenters in New York, Los Angeles, and Tokyo designed by OMA and Herzog & de Meuron, respectively.

*Yung Tsoong-King (1873–1938) was a famous tycoon, known in his day as the Flour King of China and remembered as a self-made entrepreneur with strong ties to Shanghai and the surrounding area.

“Rong Zhai has a deep connection with my family. My father, Mr. Rong Zongjing, first bought this place in 1918 after he made a successful career; he sought this place to facilitate his business management and to live with the family. After nearly 100 years, the residence was reduced from a magnificent house to an obsolete building. This renovation has been carried out in a very careful way — even the walls and stained glass were given special care to regain their original appearance. Upon completion, this residence was endowed with a brand new look, which is full of vitality and liveliness. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Prada Group for bringing back the charm and grandeur to the residence. Thanks to its elaborated planning, the residence will surely become a fashion landmark of Shanghai and welcome elites and celebrities from everywhere. I believe that my father, were he still alive, would be much delighted to see it.”

— Chairman H.C. Yung

“Prada has always drawn inspiration from the arts, not least of all architecture. The study of the practical, commercial, and historical implications of buildings has played an essential role to the development of Prada’s practice, as we have been deeply involved in both contemporary architectural experimentation and meticulous historic preservation. Separately, China — the country itself and the European perception of it — has maintained a valued place in the imagination of Prada. As our various cultural activities have expanded both through the fashion company and the Fondazione Prada, we have searched for opportunities to extend our architectural and otherwise artistic explorations back to China. It was this imperative that led us to Rong Zhai, a historical landmark that can appropriately manifest our abiding commitment to Chinese culture and the European/Chinese dialogue.”

— Miuccia Prada and Patrizio Bertelli

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THURSDAY–SATURDAY 10AM–9PM
SUNDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY 10AM–5PM
CLOSED ON MONDAY