

Project Description (499/500)

The Restaurant of Metasequoia Grove is located at the west end of Shanwan Village in the countryside of Suzhou, a typical waterside village of the Jiangnan region situated on the vast swamp plain of Taihu. Being the first phase of GOA's low-rise leisure-led complex development, the restaurant functions as a dining space for visitors and a small banquet hall to hold various public events. Instead of just an architectural construction, the project is more of a landscape that immerses into its natural context and eventually becomes part of nature, delivering a joyful moment by the water and a peaceful experience of nature where architecture enables new ways of seeing the landscape.

A grove of metasequoia trees onsite standing by an enormous expanse of water becomes the only nature skyline in this plain terrain. The forms of the metasequoia trees are abstracted and translated into a purely geometric architectural language, a pyramidal frustum, and applied to the Restaurant of Metasequoia Grove as a featuring icon and a modular inspiration for the design. The pyramidal frustum module takes three sizes and forms small-medium-large modular order according to the proportional relation of the square's side length on the bottom of 2:3:4. Three different scales of modules mix and cluster together, forming a continuous canopy structure that traces an artificial forest profile within nature to simulate the natural substances' generative process.

The canopy's overall height control is under 12m. Each pyramidal frustum module is topped by a skylight that allows entering the architecture more moderately. The roof system is divided into three layers: customized perforated aluminum panels as the outer layer, textures as the layering crowns of metasequoia trees; glass as the middle layer introducing greater luminosity; and grilled wood panels cover the inner layer. Eaves of the canopy are uniformly lowered to 2.7m, framing a horizontal scroll of wetland scenery that captures the vastness and tranquility in the imagination of a traditional Chinese painting.

To emphasize the canopy's lightness, the restaurant's load-bearing columns are minimized to 10, arranged around the interior edges of the interior space. Each load-bearing column is grouped by a cluster of 3 slender steel columns with a diameter of 10cm. Only 11 steel columns with a diameter of 15cm are set along the edge of the exterior terrace under the eaves. Each cluster of columns aligns with a corresponding edge of the wooden ceiling structure and window frames, united in color.

The design also adopts a series of strategies to maximize the transparency between interior and exterior by erasing the boundary. For example, the consistent paving material of the restaurant space to the under-eave terrace allows a sense of space extension connecting with a peripheral infinity waterscape, which integrates with the existing water body, to create coherence between the architecture and the natural wetland. Also, customized single-bay floor-to-ceiling windows with a width of over 2m and narrow frames enhance the great visual openness of the space.

Credits:

Project Name: Restaurant of Metasequoia Grove

Location: Wujiang District, Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China

GFA: 416 sqm

Design/Completion: 11/2020 - 12/2021

Client: Bluetown Group

Architect: GOA (Group of Architects)

Interior: Shanghai Yishantang Decoration Design Co., Ltd.

Landscape: Zhejiang LEON Engineering Consulting Co., Ltd.

Contractor: Shanghai Communication Construction Co., Ltd.

Operation Consultant: Suzhou Bluetown Cultural Tourism Co., Ltd.

Photographer: IN BETWEEN