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**The Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai launches RAM Assembles:
A new biennial architecture festival that celebrates architectural thinking**

**Pritzker Prize-winning architect David Chipperfield directs the inaugural
edition of RAM Assembles, entitled "Public Space"**

Date: September 22 – October 6, 2023

Location: Rockbund Art Museum, 20 Huqiu Rd, Shanghai

[Click here for opening program](#)

The strengths and weaknesses of our cities are becoming more apparent every day. Strained by a global pandemic, increasing division and inequality and the growing threat of climate crisis, we find ourselves re-evaluating the role of our built environment on our shared quality of life. The potential for the city to function in our common interests requires us to maintain an idea of what a city should be, and public space is always central to this vision.

— David Chipperfield

SHANGHAI -- RAM Assembles is a new biennial festival for interdisciplinary thinking in architecture and design, jointly launched by the Rockbund Art Museum (RAM) and the ROCKBUND team. The inaugural Artistic Director is Pritzker Prize-winning architect **David Chipperfield**, whose new museum entrance and Museum Plaza open on September 22, completing his 17-year association with the storied ROCKBUND neighbourhood.



Located north of the famous Bund in central Shanghai, the ROCKBUND neighborhood hosts a collection of historic architecture built from 1896-1932. These buildings represent examples of Shanghai's Art Deco style, characteristic of the city's late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century architecture in which European building styles were combined with Asian elements. In recent years the buildings have undergone various renovations and adaptations. In the early 2000s, David Chipperfield Architects was commissioned to restore, update and convert eleven historic buildings of the ROCKBUND. Chipperfield also designed a new extension to the Art Deco building that was originally built for the Royal Asiatic Society (RAS) and now houses the Rockbund Art Museum (RAM), in addition to a new RAM entrance and Museum Plaza.

To mark the completion of the ROCKBUND construction project and the opening of the new museum entrance and Museum Plaza, RAM has launched RAM Assembles – a biennial festival of architectural thinking. The aim of RAM Assembles is to bring together

diverse perspectives on historical and new architecture, engaging a wide range of fields concerning contemporary architecture, urbanism, art, and design. For each edition of this new biennial, the RAM team, led by its Artistic Director **X Zhu-Nowell**, will invite an architect as an artistic director to create a **new architectural intervention** in the ROCKBUND neighborhood, with a specific focus on the Museum Plaza.



Visualisation of the new Museum Plaza and new entrance to the Rockbund Art Museum (left), designed by David Chipperfield Architects, opening September 22, 2023

For the first edition, RAM has chosen architect David Chipperfield as its artistic director to celebrate his long association with this site and the completion of his work with the ROCKBUND neighborhood. RAM Assembles has also created a network of collaborations with curators, institutions, universities, architecture studios, artists, and creative companies, inviting globally-minded experts and professional teams to work together and co-create this distinctive public cultural event. The International Advisory Committee includes: curator **Hou Hanru**, **Li Xiangning**, Dean of the College of Architecture and Urban Planning at Tongji University, and **Caroline A. Jones**, Professor of Art and Architecture Theory at MIT.

Chipperfield's curatorial theme of **Public Space** takes art beyond the museum walls and integrates it into the daily life of the ROCKBUND. It breaks down the static boundaries of traditional institutions in favor of the spontaneity and multiplicity of urban life and "in between" spaces. Chipperfield's design interventions expand the physicality of the new Museum Plaza, providing new public spaces for these activities that are flexible rather than prescriptive, imbued with purpose yet not restricted to specific functions, and they mediate the relationship between performance and informality. Chipperfield comments:

These are the alleyways and back lanes, the street corners embellished by roaming vendors, the familiar portico, or the bench for a casual conversation between friends. They inform the daily negotiation between our public and private realms. The traditional communities of Shanghai preserve cherished memories of such spaces. In a non-western context where public squares are less prevalent, these liminal spaces are rendered yet more important as they provide room to be part of something and to share space and time.



David Chipperfield

The inaugural RAM Assembles represents a moment to enhance our understanding of perceiving, using, designing, sharing, and responding to public spaces. It is an opportunity to celebrate urban vitality and complexity, driving the creativity of the city and enriching our experiences in a rapidly changing world. RAM Artistic Director X Zhu-Nowell comments:

RAM has long been invested in the contemporary and historic culture of the Bund area and committed to creating a kind of cross-pollination of collaborations between the local communities. We hope the opening of Chipperfield's new Museum Plaza and RAM Assembles can further RAM's ambition to create a social and creative gathering space. Considering the ROCKBUND area as a dynamic site for experimentation, activations, and interventions, RAM Assembles will expand the museum's current exhibition and research program beyond its walls and prompt further exploration of the emerging social conditions of our time.



RAM Artistic Director X Zhu-Nowell

About Rockbund Art Museum (RAM)

Inaugurated in 2010, the Rockbund Art Museum is a contemporary art museum located on the Bund in Shanghai. The museum is housed in a historic Art Deco building from 1932 that was originally one of the first modern museums established in China. In considering what it means to be an Asia-based contemporary art museum in the 21st century, RAM aims to explore the importance of "archipelago thinking": connecting to artistic culture across Asia and beyond to gain richer perspectives on today's challenges, practices, and networks within contemporary artistic practices. We wish to build constructive, creative relationships between multiple localities in Asia and different cultures globally, to create a hub for working with a broad range of artists, researchers, and scholars, and to dive into subtle and dense layers of new experiences with our audience.

With a strong reputation for an innovative curatorial approach, RAM experiments with different models of what an art project can be, from research to alternative learning programs, from exhibition-making to unexpected performative formats. By supporting bold contemporary art practices, we aim to recognize local histories while responding to global art challenges and social change.

www.rockbundartmuseum.org

About ROCKBUND

Cover an area of approximately two city blocks, ROCKBUND neighborhood is located at the north of the world-famous Bund in central Shanghai. It stands where Huangpu River meets Suzhou Creek, west of Yuanmingyuan Road, east of Huqiu Road, south of Suzhou Road, and north of Beijing East Road. Developed by Sinolink and Rockefeller Group, ROCKBUND neighborhood includes six new buildings and 11 heritage buildings offering a gross floor area of approximately 94,000m². The long historical legacy and landmark location make the ROCKBUND a core place to experience art, culture, and creativity. ROCKBUND provides space for the creative community and is a platform for art and culture that offers diverse creative spaces, including museums and art galleries, libraries and bookstores, music studios, in addition to more than 20 restaurants and cafes, and many innovative lifestyle and fashion brands. The ROCKBUND project has seen the revitalisation of this area by a team of international architects. David Chipperfield Architects has been commissioned to restore and refurbish 11 historic buildings and the overall architectural design of ZA·Andrews & George Building. Arquitectonica has designed five new buildings.

About David Chipperfield Architects

Founded in 1985, David Chipperfield Architects has an international reputation for expertise in design process and for the enduring quality of its projects. Working across the private and public sectors, the practice's diverse portfolio includes celebrated cultural, residential, education, retail, workplace and civic projects. The practice's approach is grounded in a concern for the social and environmental sustainability of the built environment and its role in our collective quality of life. David Chipperfield Architects comprises five independent offices in London, Berlin, Milan, Shanghai and Santiago de Compostela, each one embedded in their local context while united globally by common architectural ambitions.



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