The Location

The Australian Centre on China in the World is located at the heart of the campus of The Australian National University. It looks north to Black Mountain and is enfurled by the ‘dragon vein’ of the university, Sullivans Creek. At a crossroads between the humanities and sciences, student accommodation and learning facilities the building features elements of both Australian and Chinese design. The Centre reflects aspects of the vernacular architecture of Australia while achieving a sympathetic engagement with the underlying design principles of the national capital as envisioned by Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahoney over a century ago. It interprets, synthesises and transforms Chinese architectural forms and elements into language particular to its environment.

The Architect

The building was designed by Gerald Szeto司徒佐 of Mo Atelier Szeto Architects, Beijing, in conjunction with the Canberra firm Munns Sly Moore and built by the construction company Hindmarsh. For over twenty years Gerald worked with the internationally renowned architect I.M. Pei on such iconic structures as the Bank of China Tower in Hong Kong, the Bank of China Head Office in Beijing, the Suzhou Museum and the Chancery of the People’s Republic of China in Washington DC. Gerald’s work with Mo Atelier Szeto includes the creation of academic buildings, offices, museums and hotels, as well as the interior design of commercial, hospitality, retail and residential projects. Recent designs include the Stanford Center and the Yenching Academy, both at Peking University, and the United World College in Changshu, Jiangsu province. Born in Hong Kong, Gerald studied architecture at Cornell University.

Scenes at the Center

1. Insignia
2. Spirit Wall
3. Courtyard Garden
4. Rock Garden
5. Plum Blossom Windows
6. Pinwheel Windows
7. Screens
8. Entryways and Executive Floor Cladding
9. Circular Stone Landscape
10. Cast Coloured Glass Windows
11. Furniture
12. Lanterns

Guides Map by Markuz Wernli

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE ON CHINA IN THE WORLD

Building 188, Fellow Lane, The Australian National University, Canberra • Telephone +61 2 6125 7086, Fax +61 2 6125 9213 • Email ciw@anu.edu.au • URL www.ciw.anu.edu.au
The logo of the Centre, the Chinese character 华 which means ‘flourishing’, ‘embellished’ or ‘China’, is written in the hand of the Tang-dynasty monk Huaisu (725-799CE). It is taken from a ‘grass-script’ version of the Thousand-Character Classic (Qianziwen 千字文) written in the last year of the monk’s life.

A Spirit Wall is used to shield an entryway in traditional Chinese architecture. It originates in the belief that noxious spirits travel in straight lines, and cannot move around corners or jump. A Moon Gate is built into the Spirit Wall. Moon Gates feature in Chinese gardens. The circle in a square that forms the Moon Gate is a reference to the idea that Heaven is round and Earth is Square. The circle/square pattern is repeated elsewhere in the building.

The fan-shaped terraced garden leading to the main entrance of the Centre represents the four seasons. The first terrace features Spring with Flowering Peach, Hebes and Bergenia. The next terrace is emblematic of Winter, with Japanese Black Pine, Dogwood and Lythurf. You will see Maples, Azaleas, Abelius and Box in the Autumn terrace, and for Summer a Magnolia ‘Vulcan’ provides the focus, surrounded by Daphne, Jasmine and Agapanthus. Fountain Bamboo offers a screen of greenery along the side of The Auditorium. Five Manchurian Pears, native to China, can be found at the lower end of The Auditorium, surrounded by Viburnum and Jasmine.

The five rocks in the forecourt were found on the site of the Centre. Originally moved here from McKellar, a suburb in north Belconnen, these granite rocks are positioned to accord with the location and relative heights of the Five Sacred Mountains of China or Wuyue 华山 (South), Mt Tai (Tai) 會山 (East), Mt Heng 华山 (West), Mt Heng 华山 (North) and Mt Song 會山 (Centre).

The building features two window patterns: the Plum-blossom (5a) and the Pinwheel (5b). The Plum-blossom design is inspired by the carved windows found in dividing walls in Ming and Qing gardens. The Plum-blossom Windows (two on the Executive Floor and one in the Plum-blossom Room) frame a cracked-ice pattern 冰裂花窗. This design originated in the seventeenth century and was used widely in window and door panels. The pinwheel is another traditional motif. Normally it is seen on a smaller scale, but in the window design it has been magnified. The colours used to frame the Pinwheel Windows are imperial red and traditional book-binding blue. The Pinwheel design is also used in the screens surrounding The Lotus Hall of The Auditorium, The Gallery and The Reading Room (5c), where it has been given an Art Deco inflection, making reference to Canberra’s building heritage and the vision of the city’s planners.

The Centre has two special collections of furniture. The first is of reconditioned and renovated Fred Ward (1900-1990) tables and chairs. Fred Ward was a pioneer of the modern industrial design movement in Australia who designed an entire range of furniture for the ANU from the late 1940s onwards. The Centre houses three of the boardroom tables and twenty of the boardroom chairs that were used by the first ANU Council. To complement these pieces, the Centre commissioned a circular, Fred Ward-inspired boardroom table, using a slab of Queensland Maple cut in the 1950s. The second collection is of teahouse furniture 禅凳 and Zen stools 禅凳 from the Taiwanese furniture design company Chunzai 卓意.

In March 2014, the Centre and the ANU School of Art co-hosted a visit by the Nanjing lantern makers Cao Zhenrong 曹真荣 and Cao Hong 曹红. The Cao family has long been renowned for their handmade kites and lanterns. While in Canberra, the Caoos produced lotus lanterns that are on display in the Centre. More lanterns of various sizes and designs are being made in Nanjing and will also be displayed in the building.

**Insignia**
The logo of the Centre, the Chinese character 华 which means ‘flourishing’, ‘embellished’ or ‘China’, is written in the hand of the Tang-dynasty monk Huaisu (725-799CE). It is taken from a ‘grass-script’ version of the Thousand-Character Classic (Qianziwen 千字文) written in the last year of the monk’s life.

**Spirit Wall**
A Spirit Wall is used to shield an entryway in traditional Chinese architecture. It originates in the belief that noxious spirits travel in straight lines, and cannot move around corners or jump. A Moon Gate is built into the Spirit Wall. Moon Gates feature in Chinese gardens. The circle in a square that forms the Moon Gate is a reference to the idea that Heaven is round and Earth is Square. The circle/square pattern is repeated elsewhere in the building.

**Courtyard Garden**
The fan-shaped terraced garden leading to the main entrance of the Centre represents the four seasons. The first terrace features Spring with Flowering Peach, Hebes and Bergenia. The next terrace is emblematic of Winter, with Japanese Black Pine, Dogwood and Lythurf. You will see Maples, Azaleas, Abelius and Box in the Autumn terrace, and for Summer a Magnolia ‘Vulcan’ provides the focus, surrounded by Daphne, Jasmine and Agapanthus. Fountain Bamboo offers a screen of greenery along the side of The Auditorium. Five Manchurian Pears, native to China, can be found at the lower end of The Auditorium, surrounded by Viburnum and Jasmine.

**Rock Garden**
The five rocks in the forecourt were found on the site of the Centre. Originally moved here from McKellar, a suburb in north Belconnen, these granite rocks are positioned to accord with the location and relative heights of the Five Sacred Mountains of China or Wuyue 华山 (South), Mt Tai (Tai) 會山 (East), Mt Heng 华山 (West), Mt Heng 华山 (North) and Mt Song 會山 (Centre).

**Windows and Window Screen Design**
The building features two window patterns: the Plum-blossom (5a) and the Pinwheel (5b). The Plum-blossom design is inspired by the carved windows found in dividing walls in Ming and Qing gardens. The Plum-blossom Windows (two on the Executive Floor and one in the Plum-blossom Room) frame a cracked-ice pattern 冰裂花窗. This design originated in the seventeenth century and was used widely in window and door panels. The pinwheel is another traditional motif. Normally it is seen on a smaller scale, but in the window design it has been magnified. The colours used to frame the Pinwheel Windows are imperial red and traditional book-binding blue. The Pinwheel design is also used in the screens surrounding The Lotus Hall of The Auditorium, The Gallery and The Reading Room (5c), where it has been given an Art Deco inflection, making reference to Canberra’s building heritage and the vision of the city’s planners.

**Entreways and Executive Floor Cladding**
On the Centre’s main doors is a red Moon Gate design, another example of the circle/square pattern mentioned previously. The Executive Floor is clad in hand-worked, raised-seam zinc, making reference to the Chinese tradition of grouping a staff are the precious fascicles within.

**Cast Coloured Glass Windows**
Two, hand-crafted, cast colour-ed glass windows by the Canberra-based glass sculptor, Elizabeth Kelly from Studio Tangente, are found in The Boardroom and The Executive Foyer. The red and blue of the windows refer to the colours of the Centre, also seen in the Pinwheel Window design.

**Furniture**
The Centre has two special collections of furniture. The first is of reconditioned and renovated Fred Ward (1900-1990) tables and chairs. Fred Ward was a pioneer of the modern industrial design movement in Australia who designed an entire range of furniture for the ANU from the late 1940s onwards. The Centre houses three of the boardroom tables and twenty of the boardroom chairs that were used by the first ANU Council. To complement these pieces, the Centre commissioned a circular, Fred Ward-inspired boardroom table, using a slab of Queensland Maple cut in the 1950s. The second collection is of teahouse furniture 禅凳 and Zen stools 禅凳 from the Taiwanese furniture design company Chunzai 卓意.

**Lanterns**
In March 2014, the Centre and the ANU School of Art co-hosted a visit by the Nanjing lantern makers Cao Zhenrong 曹真荣 and Cao Hong 曹红. The Cao family has long been renowned for their handmade kites and lanterns. While in Canberra, the Caoos produced lotus lanterns that are on display in the Centre. More lanterns of various sizes and designs are being made in Nanjing and will also be displayed in the building.