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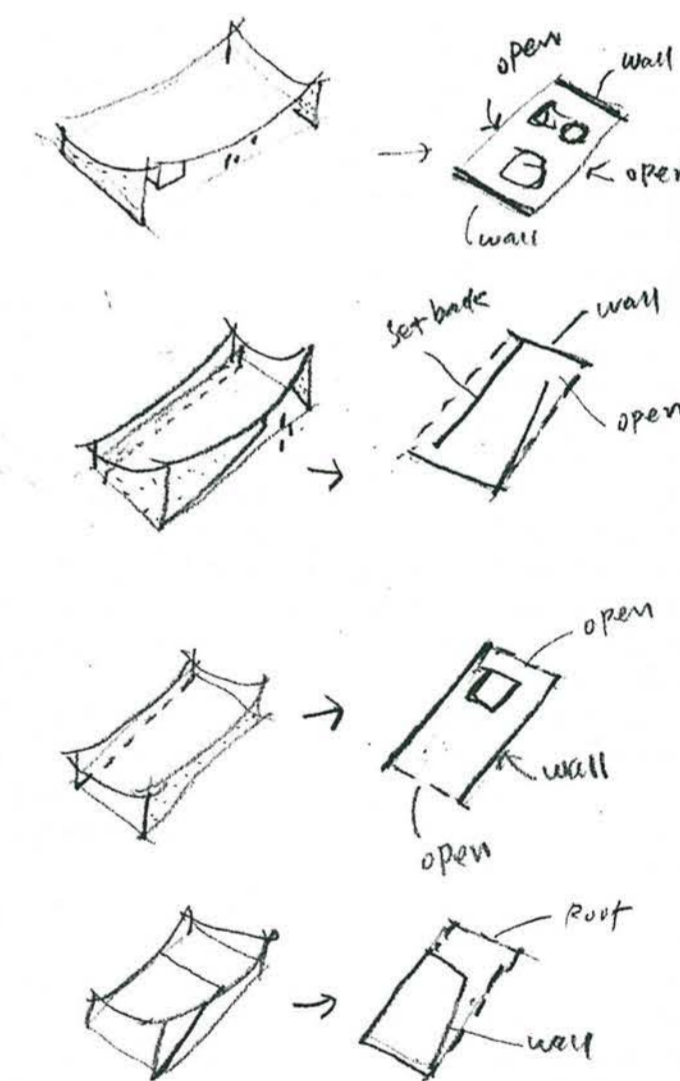
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OCT ART CENTER NATURE-BASED ESTHETIC ZIBO, SHANDONG, CHINA



Studio Zhu Pei

Founded in 2005 in Beijing, the practice focuses on art and cultural projects, blending forms, spaces, light and materials with great contextual sensitivity.



The outlook from the casement windows with their concrete transoms resembling old stone is especially striking, recalling moon-lit views onto internal gardens.

The Chinese nature-based esthetic usually conjures up images of landscape paintings and the Jiangnan gardens in Southern China. However, representing nature in contemporary Chinese art, especially the relationship between nature and architecture in the highly-urbanized reality that is China today, takes on a whole new practical and artistic dimension. Studio Zhu Pei's Zibo OCT Art Center is an answer to this challenge. Located in northern Shandong Province, Zibo is a region of plains and hills. Cold winters, hot summers and traditional stone buildings give the land a rugged untamed quality. The OCT Art Center responds to these local features, giving a new thrust to the concept of architecture and nature in contemporary China, in terms of the building's outer envelope, its interiors and relationship to the landscape.

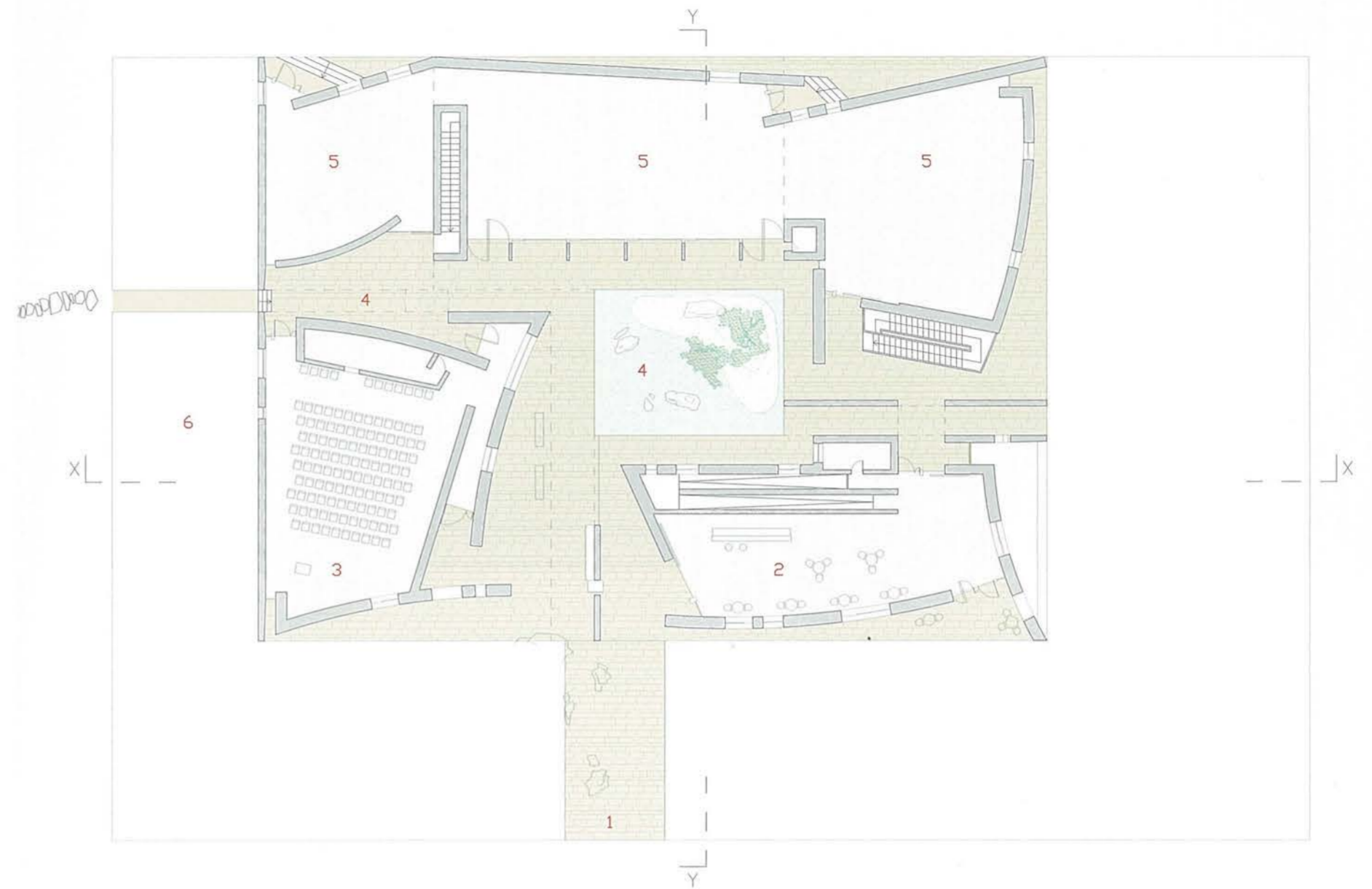
On the outside, the building is made of only two materials: unrendered stone and concrete. The latter bears the marks of the formwork, while the irregular stonework harks back to traditional building practices. The massive concrete roof encloses the central courtyard, dipping and rising like the traditional tie-dyed cloth canopies supported at both ends by bamboo poles. One side rises abruptly as if sustained by a taller pole, only to fall vertically as a crisp clean wall. Modern concrete technology maintains the original clayey texture of the cement in this state-of-the-art construction. The many stone walls beneath the roof elements recreate the secluded intimacy of traditional local buildings. The juxtaposition of artificial and natural materials aptly symbolizes the complex weave of ancient and modern, natural and artificial that is China today.

Just as the building envelope and roof hark back to traditional construction models and techniques, so too, the interiors return to the traditional inner courtyard configuration. Four rectangular spaces are enclosed by a series of pleasingly staggered curved and straight walls. The result is a weave of multiple lines, an architectural promenade but without the modern picturesque continuity of Maison La Roche-Jeanneret. Combining landscape and function, the articulated layout recalls traditional Chinese landscaping techniques that create a sequence of different scenarios. In one corner open to the sky, the shadows cast by bamboo are offset by clayey textured concrete, creating the typical winding paths of Chinese gardens

surrounded by rock-like masonry walls. The architectural elements and spaces reinforce the garden-like experience. The outlook from the casement windows with their concrete transoms resembling old stone is especially striking, recalling moon-lit views onto internal gardens.

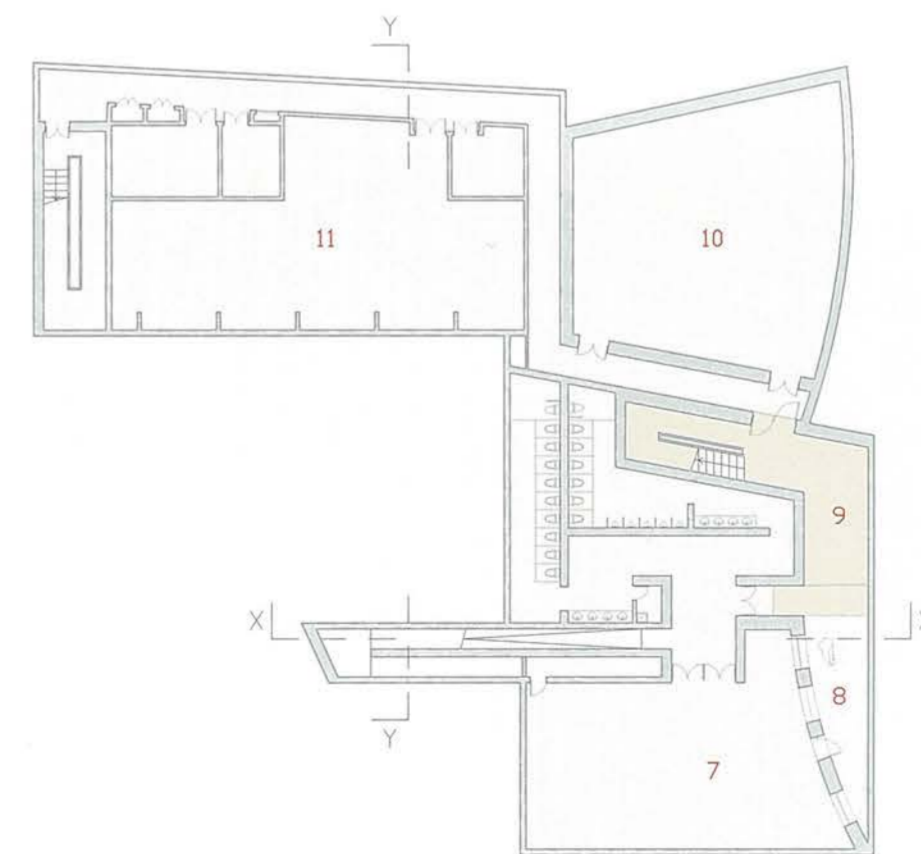
The weave of interior and exterior, architecture and nature is also subtly applied to the building and its context. Set back beneath extensive roof overhangs, the outer walls – often of reduced height with several apertures – create an intriguing area of connection with the outside, inviting people to come in. Reflected by the water, at close quarters the building appears intimate and natural. The combination of overhanging roofs, water and stone-paved pedestrian walkways offer a natural, user-friendly spatial connection between the building and the surrounding rural topography. This feature recalls Zhu Pei's Imperial Kiln Museum in Jingdezhen (*THE PLAN* 126). Here too, the architect has deliberately avoided any antagonism between the man-made and natural world, while at the same time avoiding the trap of integrationist nostalgia. The standard geometry of the water body creates a clear boundary with the surrounding landscape while the dynamic courtyard roof stands in contrast to the gentle monotony of the surrounding area. Brazilian architectural historian Carlos Eduardo Comas describes Oscar Niemeyer's tense, curved architecture in its meandering natural landscape as man-made nature. Zhu Pei, in contrast, has used a similar approach but to bring nature into man-made architecture in the tradition of the Chinese nature-based esthetic, creating a work of great poetic tension. The building is like a flowing stone in the countryside, enhancing the original landscape.

The OCT Art Center resembles an inward-looking landscape painting. Given the context of modern-day China, Zhu Pei has not attempted to reproduce a semblance of pure, unspoiled idyllic nature. The rough materials and massive architectural forms are delicately balanced with the surrounding countryside, becoming a metaphor for the double-sided character of the collective Chinese imagination of nature: on the one hand, gentle and soothing, on the other, pure artifice. This project is a cogent critique of this Chinese nature-based esthetic.



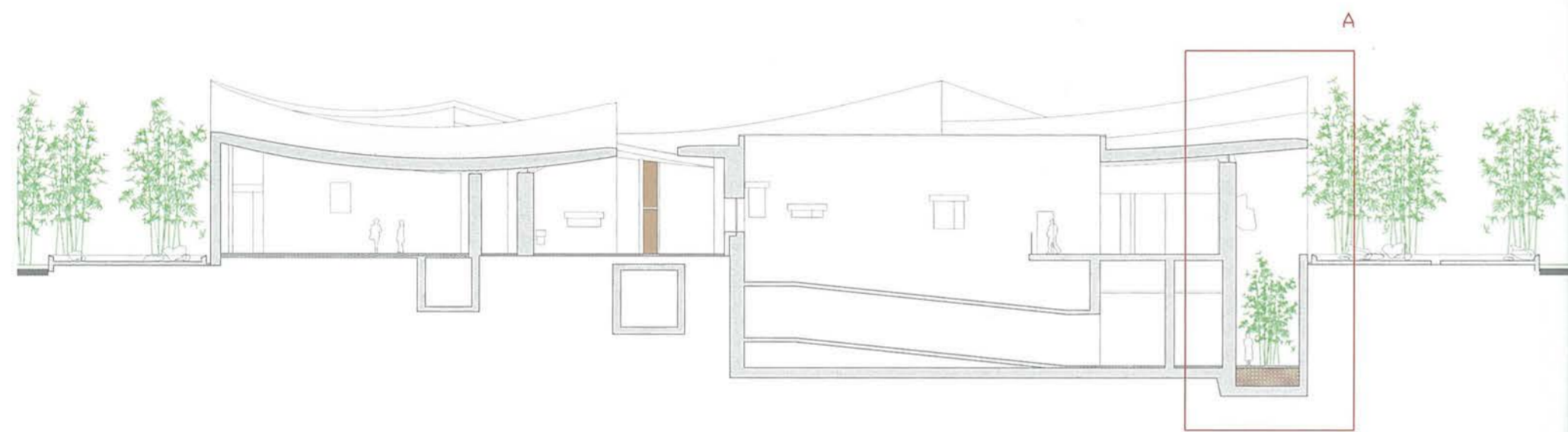
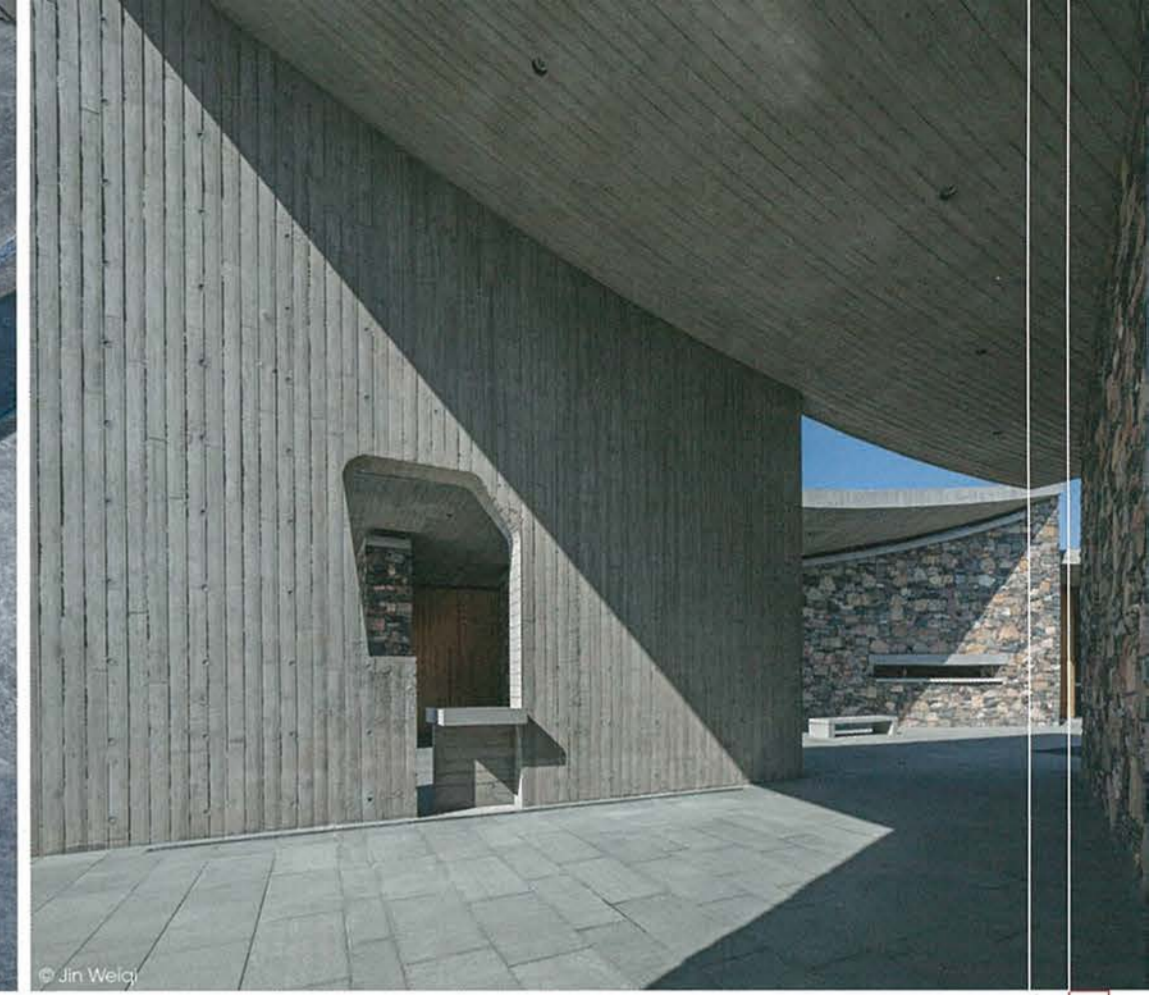
Ground floor plan – Scale 1:400

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1- Entrance | 5- Exhibition hall | 9- Sunken courtyard |
| 2- Foyer/reception | 6- Landscape pool | 10- Conference room |
| 3- Multifunctional room | 7- Office | 11- Mechanical room |
| 4- Central courtyard/garden | 8- Sunken garden | |

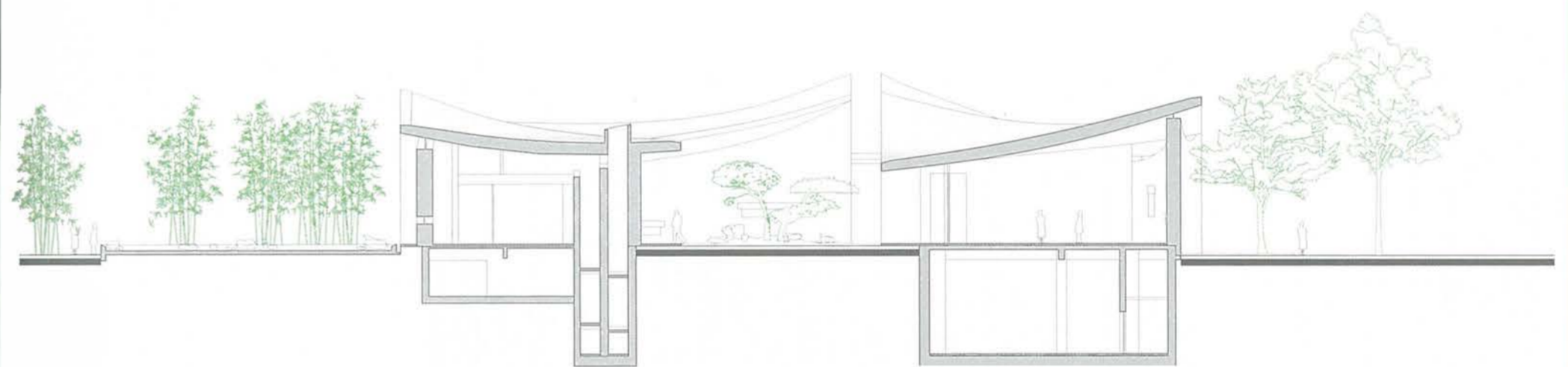


Underground floor plan – Scale 1:400

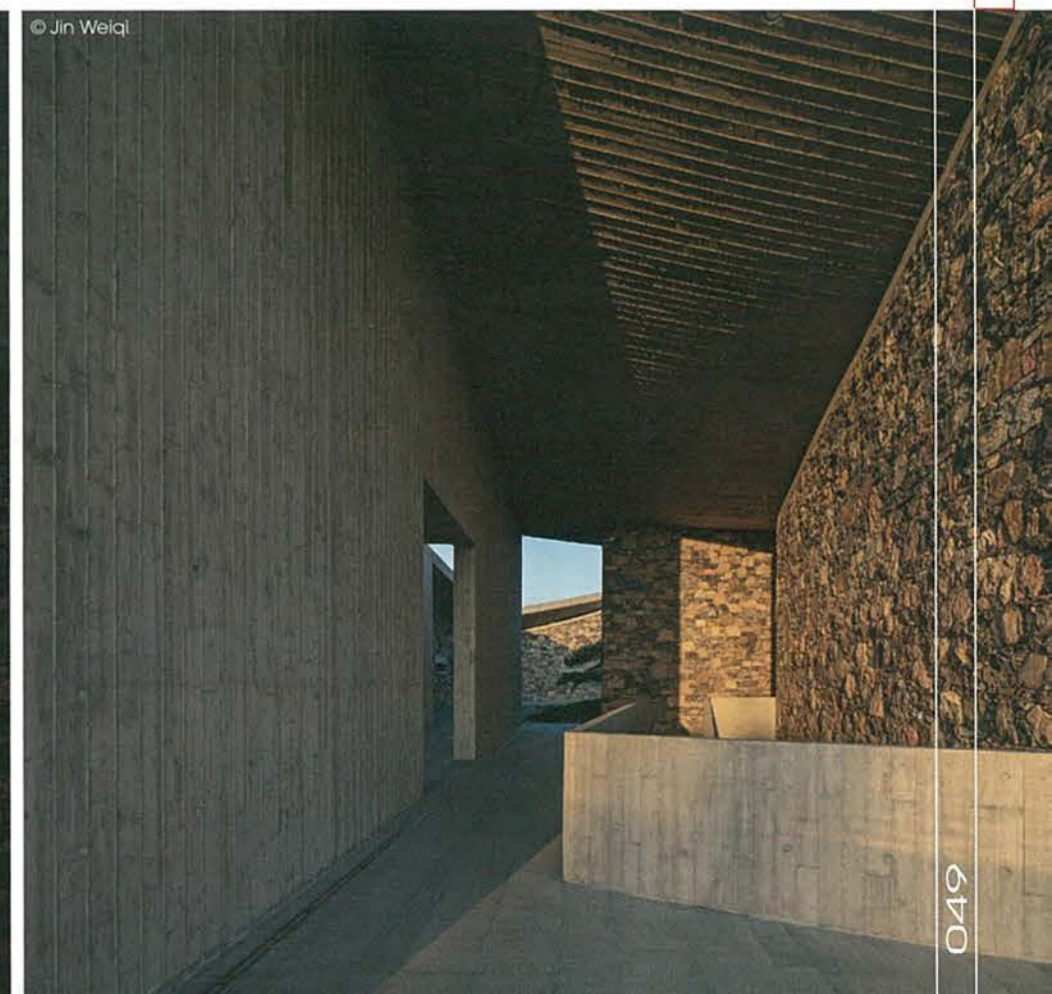
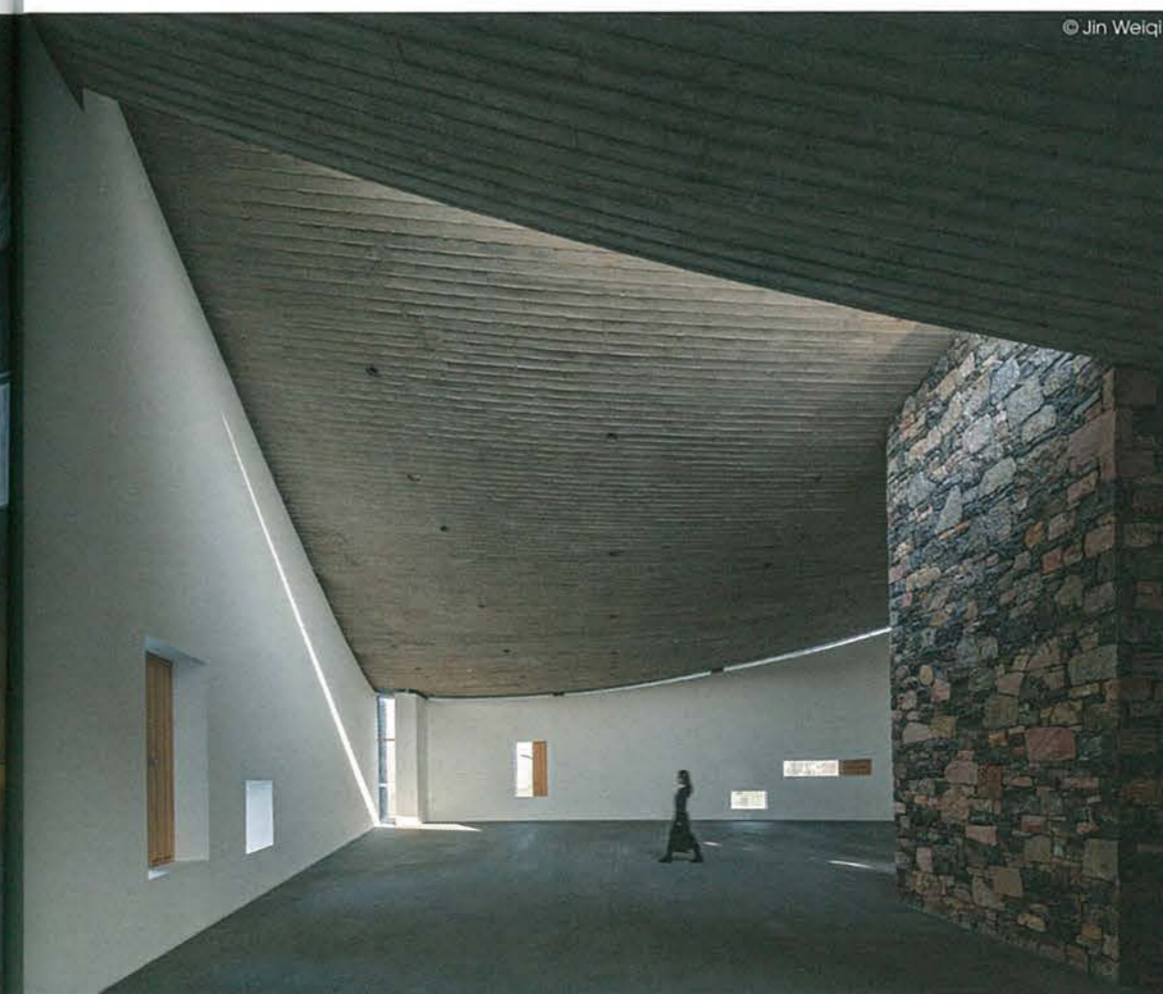


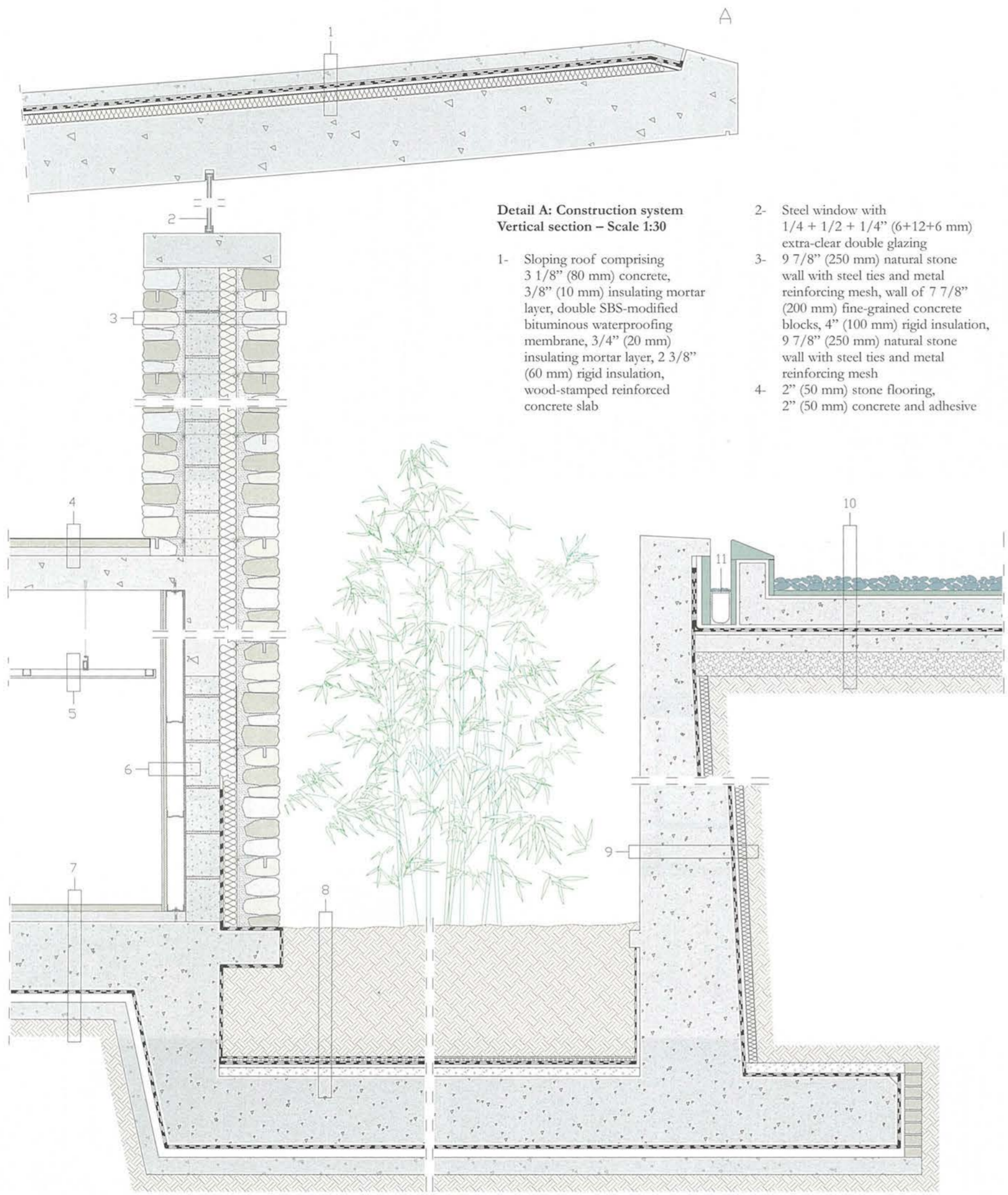


XX section – Scale 1:300



YY section – Scale 1:300

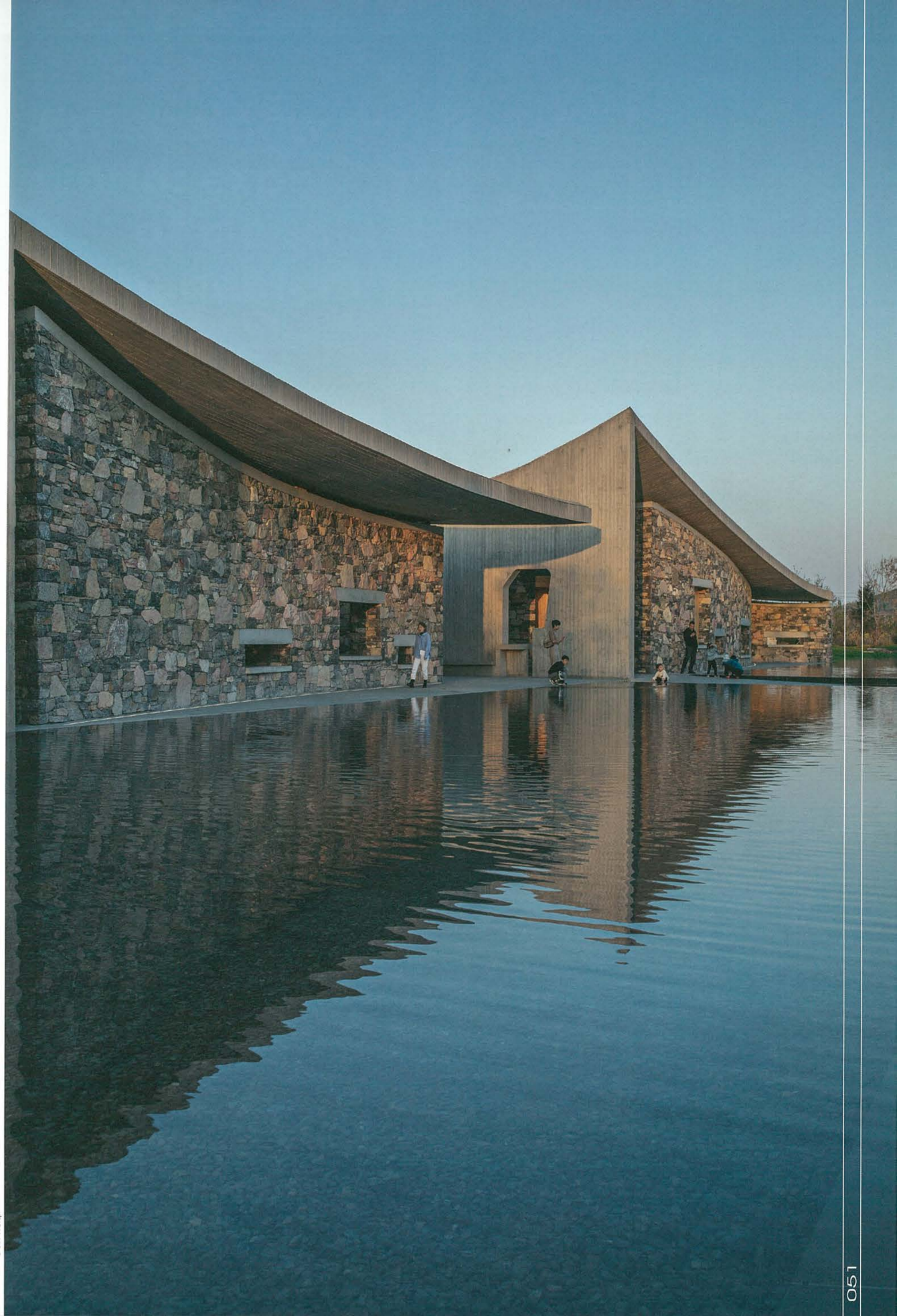




Detail A: Construction system
Vertical section – Scale 1:30

- 1- Sloping roof comprising 3 1/8" (80 mm) concrete, 3/8" (10 mm) insulating mortar layer, double SBS-modified bituminous waterproofing membrane, 3/4" (20 mm) insulating mortar layer, 2 3/8" (60 mm) rigid insulation, wood-stamped reinforced concrete slab
- 2- Steel window with 1/4 + 1/2 + 1/4" (6+12+6 mm) extra-clear double glazing
- 3- 9 7/8" (250 mm) natural stone wall with steel ties and metal reinforcing mesh, wall of 7 7/8" (200 mm) fine-grained concrete blocks, 4" (100 mm) rigid insulation, 9 7/8" (250 mm) natural stone wall with steel ties and metal reinforcing mesh
- 4- 2" (50 mm) stone flooring, 2" (50 mm) concrete and adhesive

- 5- Suspended ceiling comprising plasterboard with white latex waterproofing paint, 4 x 1 5/8" (100x40 mm) steel C-profile lightweight framing, steel tie rods
- 6- Interior finish comprising plasterboard with white latex waterproofing paint, 3/4" (18 mm) flame-retardant panel, 4 x 1 5/8" (100x40 mm) steel C-profile lightweight framing, wall of 7 7/8" (200 mm) screed, 7 7/8" (200 mm) reinforced concrete slab
- 7- fine-grained concrete blocks 2" (50 mm) stone flooring, 2" (50 mm) concrete and adhesive screed, 15 3/4" (400 mm) reinforced concrete slab with waterproofing treatment, double waterproofing membrane, 2" (50 mm) insulating mortar layer, 4" (100 mm) concrete fill, subgrade
- 8- Garden comprising soil, geotextile filter membrane, 3/4" (20 mm) drainage panel, root-repellent membrane, 3/4" (20 mm) protective concrete screed, 1 1/8" (30 mm) min h concrete topping forming slope, reinforced concrete slab with waterproofing treatment
- 9- Tapered concrete slab-on-ground with waterproofing treatment, double SBS waterproofing membrane, 3/8" (10 mm) insulating mortar layer, 2" (50 mm) rigid insulation, subgrade
- 10- Pool with 1 5/8" (40 mm) pebble base, 47 1/4 x 47 1/4 x 1 1/8" (1200x1200x30 mm) Binzhou flame green granite slabs, 3/4" (20 mm) concrete screed, 5 7/8" (150 mm) reinforced concrete slab with waterproofing treatment, 3/4" (20 mm) concrete screed, double SBS waterproofing membrane, 3/4" (20 mm) protective concrete screed, 4" (100 mm) reinforced concrete slab, 5 7/8" (150 mm) crushed stone layer, subgrade
- 11- Pre-cast concrete overflow gutter with steel grating





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CREDITS

Location: Zibo, Shandong, China
Client: Zibo OCT Group
Site Area: 27,790 m² – **Gross Floor Area:** 2,470 m² – **Architectural and Interior Design:** Studio Zhu Pei – **Design Principal:** Zhu Pei – **Landscape Design:** Studio Zhu Pei with L&A Design
Main Contractor: Taixing No.1 Construction Group

Consultants

Structures and MEP: Zibo Architecture Design and Research Institute – **Façade:** King Glass Engineering – **Lighting:** Ning Field Lighting Design

Text: Yu Yunlong, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University

All images courtesy of Studio Zhu Pei