

Tongji Innovation District Prototype to Open to the Public in May Next Year



By Li Ye, Zhang Jiongqiang

Italian design master Aldo Cibic set up his own studio in Milan at the age of 19. At 22, he joined forces with fellow designer Ettore Sottsass to launch the influential Memphis design movement. Emerging in the early 1980s, the movement challenged conventional design with bold colors, exaggerated forms and unconventional materials, and its impact continues to inspire designers today.

What Cibic himself did not foresee is that he is now an honor-

ary professor at Tongji University, living in Shanghai and deeply involved in local practice. In Anshan New Village, Yangpu District, he has led the creation of the NICE2035 Future Living Prototype Street, exploring new approaches to community building and preservation. NICE2035 stands for Neighborhood of Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship towards 2035. Cibic believes Shanghai's design environment will inspire him to create more works, and he has even expressed interest in initiating a new design movement, one he hopes will be

"bigger than Memphis."

At the Fourth International Design 100 Forum, part of the 2025 World Design Capital Conference, Cibic and ten other masters were appointed as the fourth cohort of experts to the International Design 100 Think Tank.

The International Design 100 Think Tank, commissioned by the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Economy and Informatization and led by Tongji University, is one of the key outcomes of the inaugural World Design Capital Conference held in 2022. As a new type of think tank, it

functions as a world-class creative community, bringing together global leaders from the design industry, organizations and academia.

Several years ago, at the invitation of a close friend at Tongji University, Cibic came to Shanghai. He redesigned the entire residential compound at Lane 1028, Siping Road, transforming it into the NICE2035 Future Living Prototype Street. The project emphasizes mixed-use development, connecting adjacent storefronts and reorganizing space, while introducing new concepts such as the Zhu Zheqin Sound Lab, a contemporary jewelry and new culture center, a community incubation hub, and Aston Martin's first overseas laboratory, meeting the diverse cultural needs of local residents.

Urban renewal does not require large-scale demolition and reconstruction, Aldo Cibic emphasized. Whether in material use or design philosophy, a key principle is to pause and take stock of what already exists. By combining "old materials" with modern technologies, he said, new life can emerge. Today, Cibic finds great pleasure in the everyday rhythm of cycling to work. This down-to-earth urban experience does not conflict with his research or his role as an "imaginative reformer." As he observed, "China's design environment today feels much like Milan in the 1980s—full of optimism about the future, curiosity about the new, and people ready to take action. That's why starting a new chapter in Shanghai feels exactly right."

Recently, the launch meeting for the Tongji NICE2035 Chifeng Road Organic Renewal Project was held.

Tongji University, in collaboration with Yangpu District, will develop an urban innovation district that integrates prototype innovation, creative design, AI applications, IP incubation, and community life. The project aims to achieve deep integration among a university campus, a technology park, and a public community, setting a model for future-oriented urban living. The district is scheduled to open to the public next May, coinciding with the 119th anniversary of Tongji University.

The NICE2035 Chifeng Road launch zone will feature three major components: the Future Laboratory for Construction in Extreme Environments, the Smart Construction "Better Homes" Future Living Lab, and the Chifeng Road Future Prototype Street. As a key part of the project, Tongji University's College of Civil Engineering announced the establishment of the Future Laboratory for Construction in Extreme Environments. Leveraging the university's multidisciplinary strengths, the lab will explore new scenarios such as high-altitude, polar, and extraterrestrial environments, focusing on cutting-edge technologies including low-carbon, smart, and resilient construction, and advancing both research and real-world applications. The Smart Construction "Better Homes" Future Living Lab will invite design teams from China and abroad to create demonstration models of "better homes, better neighborhoods, better communities, and better urban districts." Meanwhile, the Chifeng Road Future Prototype Street will center on prototype innovation, serving as a new engine and source of innovation for the Tongji Knowledge Economy Circle.

Fuxing Island Emerges as a Living Hub of Innovation

By Cheng Jiajia

Urban renewal is a key pathway to high-quality urban development, better living standards, and more effective governance. Since the unveiling of the Shanghai Key Laboratory of Quantum Urban Spatiotemporal Innovation, a series of events—including the Xiaohongshu Adventure Island, the Bilibili Cheers Music Festival, and the Urban Space Art Season—have taken place on Fuxing Island. These activities have kept the island in the public spotlight, helping it stand out as a new hotspot in Shanghai's urban renewal efforts. Yet behind the city's grand development narrative lies the quiet but vital participation of individuals.

Recently, a democratic consultation event titled "Fuxing Road, the Dream of Renewal" was held at Shipyard Park on Fuxing Island. More than 130 participants, including municipal and district people's congress deputies, government officials, experts and scholars, as well as local residents, gathered to discuss Fuxing Island's transformation from a cen-

tury-old industrial site into a future innovation hub and to explore practical pathways to turning it into a "top-tier island."

The transformation of the Yangpu waterfront into a "living showcase" has shown that industrial heritage can serve as a unique spiritual landmark. The development of Fuxing Island is not about erasing the past, but about creatively reinterpreting it.

Gao Changjun, curator of the Shanghai Urban Space Art Season, said: "Many of our creative projects turn abandoned spaces into sites of art. The goal is to let the hard-edged beauty of industrial aesthetics converse with the gentle vitality of nature, creating places with a one-of-a-kind character."

Russian tenor Nikolai Shamov recently took part in the China Europe Cultural Festival. He remarked that "the space here is rich in history and infused with nature, making it fertile ground for artistic creation."

In the island's overall development blueprint, the concept of a "digital intelligence island" ranks first. As a pilot area for Shanghai's digital

transformation, Yangpu District aims to inject strong digital momentum into the future development of Fuxing Island.

Cui Peihong, a district-level people's congress deputy, suggested that quantum cities are a critical foundation for the evolution of digital twins toward the metaverse, and stressed the need to coordinate the planning of communications infrastructure with urban construction. Municipal people's congress deputy Xu Liping, meanwhile, called for a more measured approach, noting that the development of quantum cities should take into account the cost-effectiveness and long-term sustainability of holographic sensing technologies.

All ambitious visions ultimately come down to livability.

"As a lifelong resident of Yangpu, I have been closely following the development of Fuxing Island," said Yu Xun, a professor at East China University of Political Science and Law. "I hope the island can leverage technological empowerment to become a pilot site for Shanghai's exploration

of low-altitude economy applications such as drone delivery and autonomous vehicles. By being among the first to implement advanced technologies, it can truly improve residents' quality of life."

The use and development of Fuxing Island have long been a key focus for municipal and district people's congress deputies.

Wu Hao, a district-level deputy, noted that the development of a quantum city should seamlessly integrate the real and the virtual, as well as online and offline urban construction, operations, and governance. He stressed the importance of creating everyday living, mobility, and consumption models that appeal to young people and entrepreneurs.

"At the community level, we have established an 'Island Affairs Council' to support large-scale events involving tens of thousands of participants," said a neighborhood grid coordinator at the event. "We focus on governance and public service issues, strengthen service coordination, and are actively exploring

how to translate new technologies and ideas from quantum city governance into practical, actionable solutions at the grassroots level, using manageable and precise entry points to achieve refined management."

Fuxing Island's path of renewal is not only a path of innovation, but also one of democratic participation.

One expert at the event described the island's transformation this way: "The century-long timeline of Fuxing Island connects history at one end and the future at the other. While the destination cannot be fully predicted, it will undoubtedly be full of vitality."

Schrödinger's cat beneath towering cranes, the clockwork-style mascot "Quantum Kid," and the ship-shaped deck park all reflect a dialogue between art and history that has infused Fuxing Island with new life. As greater consensus takes shape and more proposals are put into practice, Yangpu District is set to write a new chapter of people-centered urban development on Fuxing Island, marked by warmth, insight, and innovation.