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Losing Land: Urbanization and Emotional Displacement

As someone born in the 1980s, I have personally witnessed China's most intense wave of urbanization. In the span of just a few decades, people migrated en masse from rural areas to cities built of concrete and steel. This transformation marked a rapid shift from an agrarian society to a modern urban one—yet it came at the cost of severing emotional ties to the land. Many lost their sense of belonging: uprooted from their hometowns, they struggled to find grounding in unfamiliar urban environments that were themselves in constant flux. The cities, often built hastily to meet development demands, have since proven incompatible with the evolving needs of their residents. As a result, large swaths of the urban landscape are now facing the pressure of renewal and reinvention.



Urban expansion has encroached on vast areas of farmland.



With farmland lost, crops are now being planted on marginal or degraded land.



New modern city.



Many early rural migrants to the city still carry a deep emotional connection to farming.



At the edges of modern cities, some residents continue to resist relocation—commonly referred to as 'nail houses'.

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Cement, glass and corten steel for the renovation of a castle

Holding On: Memory, Aesthetics, and the Value of the Old

In this ongoing process of demolition and rebuilding, fleeting emotional connections to the city are repeatedly abandoned—each cycle leaving deeper emotional ruptures. My studies at the Royal College of Art, coupled with my travels across Europe, have profoundly shaped my understanding of how history and emotion can be embedded in the urban fabric, and how these elements contribute to a sense of well-being and identity. Urban renewal, I believe, should not be a clean slate; rather, it should involve the thoughtful integration of the past—preserving traces of history, even modest ones, to foster continuity and belonging. The reuse of reclaimed materials, for example, is not merely an environmentally conscious strategy, but also a way to construct a distinctive urban aesthetic—one that allows people to feel a sense of warmth and rootedness in contemporary life.



New roof with old walls



the glass house project fosters literal and historical transparency at 'menokin' ruins in virginia



Reconstruction of Historical place



A transparent Glass skin modernizes this traditional Chinese Hutong



New walls with old bricks

Building Forward: Strategies for Designing with Not New

“Design with Not New” has become a central question in my design practice. In future projects, I aim to develop context-sensitive strategies that respond not only to sustainability and heritage preservation, but also to the emotional dimension of space—seeking to rebuild the connections between people, memory, and place. I believe the true value of design lies in its ability to introduce new narratives and functions while honoring the character and stories embedded in existing spaces. In doing so, we do not simply preserve the past—we reinterpret and reweave it into the present, creating places that are emotionally resonant, socially meaningful, and creatively renewed.



Renovatio project in Beijing Hutong



New house within old walls



Historical block protection and transformation