

“ROSSANA HU: OF SILENCE, SEARCH, AND SERENDIPITY”

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UNSCRIPTED with Rossana Hu: Of silence, search, and serendipity

China-based architect Rossana Hu opens up about the goodness in her strict upbringing, and how her five-year maternity leave has helped her connect with other women.

by Zohra Khan | Published on : Jan 07, 2022

Immersed in a rich spiritual atmosphere coupled with very little material assets, Rossana Hu (b.1968) grew up in a small island of [Taiwan](#) like any other child. She played on the streets and hunted the most unusual metal scraps from a forgotten corner in her neighbourhood. “There were no toys, I don’t remember having a single toy,” says Hu, the founder of multidisciplinary [Shanghai](#)-based practice, [Neri&Hu](#) on [UNSCRIPTED](#). Looking back at the simplicity and innocence of her childhood, her roots and culture, to how she met her partner [Lyndon Neri](#) and built a family of five and an influential architectural practice, Hu opens up about the nuances people rarely know about her life in this 19-minute video.

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"A defining moment of my childhood," she reminisces, "was going to the piano lessons. I hated Wednesdays because I had to go to the piano teacher and I hated practicing. It was much like defying my parents by not practicing but also being scared about going to the piano teacher." Hu's parents were a Chinese couple comprising simple, hard-working individuals whose early years were spent witnessing the last remnants of the **Second World War**. The impoverishment gave way to a strict upbringing for Hu and her siblings where they were exposed to the learnings of their cultural identity, a relentless passion to work hard, and a belief in the supreme power.



Rossana Hu (second from right) when she was seven-years-old

Image: © Neri&Hu Design and Research Office

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Hu's tryst in architecture began with an initial confusion and disconcert owing to how mass media back then, particularly iconic novels like *The Fountain Head*, projected the image of an architect as an egotistical hero. Elsewhere popular movies represented architects to be well cultured, chic, rich and artistic characters. It was at this time that she was juggling with the tinted idea of an architect that she met her husband Lyndon Neri. Three years older to Hu and a friend of Hu's sister, Neri was studying architecture at UC Berkeley and the three of them visited the same church while growing up. On UNSCRIPTED, Hu recounts how she had approached Neri for counseling, things she initially liked about him, and what led the interactions turn into countless serendipitous dates and eventually a life together. Neri and Hu got married in 1992 and are parents to three children: Jeremy, Hannah, and Zachary.



Rossana Hu and Lyndon Neri from their marriage. 1992

Image: © Neri&Hu Design and Research Office

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Hu also tells us about the time when she took five years off from work to be a full time mom and how the learnings of motherhood later reciprocated in her work. “I think those were also important years for me as a woman, as a mother, and as a wife. Totally crazy but it makes me value work because I realised working is so much easier than being at home. I am sure any woman who has gone through this understand what I am saying. And because of that experience I also understand the women in my office much more,” observes the 54-year-old architect.



On UNSCRIPTED, find out how Rossana Hu and Lyndon Neri serendipitously landed in Shanghai and further established their practice (photographed here is the exterior view of the Neri&Hu Design and Research Office in Shanghai)

Image: Chen Hao

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Hu studied Master of Architecture and Urban Planning from Princeton University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture and Music from the University of California at Berkeley. Before establishing Neri&Hu with her partner, she had worked for Michael Graves & Associates, Ralph Lerner Architect in Princeton, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in **New York City**, and The Architects Collaborative (TAC) in **San Francisco**. Today, the couple is regarded as one of the leading figures in the sphere of Chinese architecture and design. With over 100 architects and designers working as part of their team, some of their recognised projects include The Waterhouse at South Bund in Shanghai, The Walled – Tsingpu Yangzhou Retreat, and Suzhou Chapel.



LAN, GAN. 2018

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