

# Light Meets Life

## 光壽無量

One of the most amazing aspects of this project is the way in which it has manifested effortlessly and organically, as if the universe wanted Light to Meet Life in the mountains of Taiwan. We have been envisioning a larger center to host more guests for years, and as you know from previous issues the donation of the land came out of the blue. We were stunned when a local donor was over for tea one day and let it slip that he was buying land for us. Then, recently we found out that the property size has been increased by further donations, allowing us to circumvent certain zoning restrictions and build the center we envision. From aid in gaining non-profit status to financial guidance and advice, from the donors to all the fundraising events—the conformation and support we have received so far is overwhelmingly heart-wrenching and fills us with inspiration!

There is a common mistake in architecture where designers try to conform the landscape to the buildings, but if one wishes to live in the mountains then one wishes to live in the mountains. Why buy mountain land and then level it? Why buy a forest and then cut down all the trees to build a house? We know of a magical art gallery/event center in San Yi, Taiwan that demonstrates a more natural, Dao-

ist approach to building: The architect who owns it hit a mountain spring when he was digging the foundation and the land soon flooded. His colleagues and friends all told him he would have to abandon the project and build elsewhere, but he saw this as an opportunity instead of a misfortune. The result is a beautiful set of buildings surrounded by water and connected by bridges, with koi

ponds, waterfalls cascading from floor to floor, etc. We also very much hope to design our new center in harmony with the land—its contours and energy, flowing and flying with the cliffs, the trees, the river and the waterfall there.

Continuing our trend of serendipitous encounters with people that will be of great service to the manifestation of this project, we recently went to stay in Sun Moon Lake and wound up randomly choosing a new guesthouse that provided us with a very important piece of the puzzle. We have known that we want to have a main hall, a meditation hall and two rows of residences: one for

short-term guests and one for long-term stay. The guest house in Sun Moon Lake was built by two brothers in the style of the old wooden houses that Japanese built all over the island when they controlled Taiwan—many Japanese were actually in Sun Moon Lake at that time (and





were incidentally responsible for bringing the fabulous old-growth, large leaf Red Tea here that we all know and love). However, there are sadly very few builders/carpenters/architects left with the knowledge and skill to build such houses. The brothers researched, experimented and designed their guesthouse by themselves, and did most of the construction personally, by hand. It was amazing to see in living focus the very design that we hope to build for all of you!

The houses are designed in a row, with a single roof, which economizes construction costs. The gap between each of the houses is good for maintenance and also makes each one soundproof and quiet. We hope to use dark, Taiwanese wood which lasts a long time and has a nice fragrance—noticeable when you come into the houses. The whole building will be surrounded by a one-meter-wide, deep moat, which serves three purposes: firstly, there are snakes and other critters in the mountains of Taiwan, and having a moat around the residences prevents them from entering; secondly, it is aesthetically pleasing to cross a small wooden bridge into one's residence. It lends the building a safe, otherworldly feeling (plus we can also fill the moats with beautiful koi fish). Finally, having such water all around the building is an excellent building feature according to Daoist geomancy (*feng shui*). And the fact that our building will also have a mountain behind them makes them doubly fortunate (actually the Chinese phrase 'having a mountain behind one' means that one is extremely abundant).

Inside, there will be a raised platform with enough sleeping space for four to five people, a small tea area with cushions, and a low table that can double as a study area. We hope that this lounge/tea drinking area will have nice views and many windows like at the guesthouse we visited! Each tea area in our residences will come equipped with a kettle and teaware so guests can practice in their rooms. The brothers in Sun Moon Lake designed a nice, simple bathroom with a built-in Japanese tub, which is very affordable and lends the small house a sense of comfort.

We discussed our project with the owners of the guesthouse. They were happy to lend us their designs, and were very inspired by our vision, offering to come and help build as volunteers, as well as to connect us to some of the sources they used for materials. In light of that, the pictures here are a pretty accurate representation of what our residences will look like at the new center, with some minor changes that will make the buildings suit our purposes. The permanent residences will be similarly built in a row, only with slightly smaller rooms suitable for one or two people.

We will be able to house around twenty short-term guests and ten long-term residential students at any one time, allowing us to double the amount of visitors we can host each year! It is amazing to see all the details of this project start to come together: from non-profit status to a professional financial proposal, from building designs to an increase in acreage! As our dear brother Jared always says: "The more it takes

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form, the more it takes form!" It sounds simple, but it is actually deep, for the more our dreams and visions take shape and form, the closer we are to realizing them. And in building a dream, every detail makes the whole project that much more real, like imagining that we were sleeping and drinking tea in the new center, seeing what our residences will look like in the flesh; and more importantly, imagining them filled up with all of you each year, emerging refreshed and smilingly making your way to the main hall for breakfast, some tea and a hug...

Should any of you wish to contribute or have any ideas for ways to help us realize this vibrant dream,

please contact us. You can donate at the Center page of our GTH website or send a check to:

**Global Tea Hut West  
2441 Beverley Ave. #6  
Santa Monica, CA 90405  
United States**

Or [contact](#) us for other ways to support.



