

Proposal title: *Tongue and Groove*
Chronotopia: Central Station
Competition 1

General Concept:

Modern immigration and assimilation within nation states evokes an image of 19th century steamboats and huddled bodies moving in and out of ports around the globe. The movement and exchange of people, goods and ideas, and what we call immigration today finds its roots in the forging of the Silk Road, stretching back to circa 200 AD. This trade route was the initial connection between Eastern and Western cultures, linking China to the Mediterranean Sea. Historically, the Silk Road is book-ended in time by the Han Dynasty and the discovery of the New World in the 15th century.

To understand migration and immigration on a deep level, this proposal offers a two-fold consideration of historical Chinese building techniques as a way to connect modern immigration as well as the rapid movement of people through spaces such as an underground transportation system, to its ancestral seed and historical precedent.

First, in collaboration with the site architects, this project proposes the study, consideration and modern implementation and interpretation of Chinese wood joins as subtle interventions into the building's planned architecture. This would include integrating historic joints within the building's columns, handrails, stairs and floor.

Second, in collaboration with the architects, and corresponding to the historical joins referenced and made visible in the architecture, the artist will develop a series of benches and other functional furniture designed as enlarged, human-scale versions of common, modern wooden block puzzles, which are modeled after historic Chinese joins.

Spanning the centuries of the Silk Road, Chinese building methods evolved from prehistoric techniques, which reached its height in the Tang Dynasty (7th and 8th centuries AD). Due to climatic considerations where significant temperature and humidity level fluctuations exist, as well as the ever present threat of an earthquake, it was necessary to develop elaborate and complex joins in order to lock the wood together, while also allowing for its flexibility.

Extrapolated from their utilitarian context, the complex joins such as the Luban Lock or Kongmin Lock developed by Zhuge Kongming with carpenter Lu Ban's techniques, are today commonly reproduced as wooden puzzles. Today, [REDACTED] these "toys" are common items in immigrant households; where parents have yet to access the dominant culture because of language barriers, and so seek out toys that do not need verbal explanation or translation. They propose a logical challenge that exists outside of language and cultural coding.

The essence of this proposal relies on a sincere and detailed collaboration with the Central Station project's architects, open to adaptation, discussion and various permutations. This proposal may yield a range of outcomes to be planned with the architects, ranging from visible joins within furniture elements dispersed throughout the station, to a few concentrated details within the architecture. The materials should be determined by both the artist and the architects. The intention is to reunite both the artistic and architectural budget and vision, 'reinvesting' one into the other.