

# 张蓓： 不忘初心，踏歌而行

文/雷娜

2009年，当张蓓(EMBA 2008)还在中欧国际工商学院读书的时候，她在丽江古城租下了一座“四合五天井”的纳西族古宅大院。这是一座重点文物保护单位，她克服了各种施工难题，让古宅修复如初，并以中西合璧的方式装饰，建立了她在丽江的第一家精品酒店“花间堂·植梦院”。时隔五年，花间堂已在中国南方经营着14家分店，并于2012年获得维思资本6000万元的A轮融资，但这似乎远不能概括花间堂的成就，重要的是，他们以社会与商业效益并重的方式弘扬了中国传统建筑文化，并为在都市中打拼的现代人提供了一种庭院安稳、岁月静好的生活方式……

A year into her studies at CEIBS, Lucy Zhang (EMBA 2008) rented an ancient house whose historical and cultural significance had earned it special protection as one of China's most prized relics. The courtyard-style structure with five skylights had been built by the Naxi, an ethnic minority in southwest China. Zhang took on the daunting challenge of renovating it to its former glory. Ever mindful of the need to respect the structure's – and China's – cultural heritage, she transformed the building by using a mixture of Chinese and Western styles. The results were amazing and this became Zhang's first premium hotel in Lijiang: Blossom Hill Inn's Dream Flower Garden.

Five years later, Blossom Hill Inn has 14 branches in southern China, and its success led Envision Capital to invest RMB 60 million in its future growth. This vote of confidence in her company is important to Zhang. But even more important to her is her role in protecting and promoting China's traditional architectural culture. The challenge is finding the right balance between her social and commercial responsibilities.



# Lucy Zhang: Unmatched Expertise in Exquisite Boutique Hotels

by Lei Na

It's easy to understand why Zhang was a radio host in a former life, there is a strength to her soothing voice. Listening to her explain the passion behind her projects, it makes perfect sense that she was able to persuade the dwellers of centuries-old houses to hand over the fate of their residences to her. Zhang has great taste. Her designs, and the pieces she produces herself, are strong enough to stand on their own – nothing else is needed to enhance their beauty, no element of her work is unnecessary. Each piece is perfection.

Labelling Zhang, putting her in a neat little category that helps us understand her, is difficult. In a sense, she's like an ancient Chinese figure, the embodiment of our yearning for the classical Chinese spirit. She is calm and composed, a hardworking entrepreneur with forward-thinking ideas. And then there is her artistic side. The two temperaments combine perfectly in her, like two sides of the same coin. Zhang has a high regard for Chinese tradition but this does not stop her from looking for inspiration elsewhere in the world. She is adept at finding a delicate balance between these two views, one that adds to the theoretical depth of the Blossom Hill Inn philosophy.

In an exclusive interview with *TheLINK*, Zhang explains her passion, providing insight into her unmatched expertise in creating exquisite boutique hotels that take us all back to simpler times.



***TheLINK:* How did you come up with the idea of renovating ancient Chinese courtyards and turning them into premium hotels whose cultural and historic elements speak to our very soul?**

I like the lifestyle in a courtyard, because as a child I spent some time in my grandparents' courtyard house. At the time we only had one day free each week, but we would still take a two-hour bicycle ride to my grandparents', just to pick the newly-budding peach blossoms for the vase. Courtyard life was a lifestyle in which residents lived independent family lives while living in harmony with other families, and I experienced this same feeling in the small inn of Lijiang, which I later renovated as my first project. The ancient house I chose was one of China's key protected cultural relics. When I spoke with the old man living there, he said the wintersweet trees planted at his wedding were still there in the yard; their fragrance was still in the air despite the withered and fallen leaves. The emotion in his words moved me deeply, and I became determined to renovate the old house to its former perfection.

What I'd like to build is a hotel into which a woman can walk, and where she can live without any embarrassment. She can enjoy

“我们今天所做的工作，一定会留下我们这个时代的印迹。”

“花间堂”的名字源于李白诗句“花间一壶酒，独酌无相亲”，但对于徜徉在那些美丽庭院中的客人来说，心中浮现的也许是另一番诗情画意，“浮生长恨欢愉少，肯爱千金轻一笑。为君持酒劝斜阳，且向花间留晚照。”无论是乐享孤独，还是呼朋唤友，人们都能在花间堂找到舒适自在的空间，也许这就是花间堂的独特之处。

张蓓曾经做过电台主持人，坐在对面听她说话，会觉得那悦耳的嗓音中有种动人心弦的力量。你会相信，她能够打动那些世代住在古宅中的居民，让他们放心地将百年老宅的命运交给她，那是一件意料之中的事。她品位绝佳，经她设计整理过的物件，仿佛都能不多不少、不增不减地待在那里。但无论是以艺术家或是企业家的身份来形容她，似乎都不够准确。从某种意义上说，她像一位古代的中国人，或者接近于我们对于中国古典精神的向往，恬静从容、勤奋美好；但她又是一位有着先进理念的企业经营者。两种气质在她身上犹如一枚精致银币的两面般完美结合。在事业前进的道路上，她时常强调“不忘初心”，有着“士不可不弘毅”的抱负。她尊重传统，又放眼世界，这两种精神之间散发出一种微妙的张力，为花间堂的理念平添了一份厚重感。而当我们站在庭院之中，腊梅树下，会发现这份沉甸甸的理想终究化为了一种优雅气韵，让人沉醉满足、踏歌而行，庆幸在这世间寻着了这样的地方，这样的人。

下文是花间堂创始人张蓓女士接受《TheLINK》杂志独家专访：

**《TheLINK》：修复中国古典庭院建筑，将它们改造成极具人文气息的精品酒店，请问您是怎样想到这个理念的？**

我喜欢庭院中的生活方式，这缘于小时候在爷爷奶奶家的四合院中度过时光。那时我们每周只有一天休假，但依然会骑两小时的自行车来到爷爷奶奶家，去摘刚刚盛开的桃花插在瓶中。庭院生活是一种居民彼此独立又和谐共处的生活方式，这种感觉我在丽江的小客栈中一下子就找到了。我看上的老宅子是丽江的世界文化遗产重点保护民居之一，当我和住在那里的老人交流时，他说结婚时种的腊梅还在院子里，抬头望去，树叶凋零，花香如故。这其中的感情很打动我，让我下决心将老宅保护好，要修旧如旧。

我想做的酒店，应该是一个女人走进来、住下来，不觉得尴尬的地方。她可以享受自己的孤独，也能够很自然地与周围的人结识聊天。我觉得这个理念最好的载体就是类似四合院的地方。我在花间堂中融入了不同的功能区域，有影音室、书房、瑜伽馆、西餐厅、红酒吧，等等，影音室就像家里的客厅，书房供人阅读书籍，院子可以让人懒洋洋地喝下午茶。在我最初的想象中，这里就是我的家，只是多出几间客房招待朋友，整个布置都是按照家的样子来的。

**《TheLINK》：您本人有着很多海外经历，在开发花间堂的过程中，国外的建筑文化有没有给您以启迪？**

留学日本时我还很年轻，当时有个很深的感触：那里的自然很美，但是人工加上去的装饰更美。这让我有种使命感，希望自己未来所做也能够为中国的山水加分。我曾去过北欧的芬兰、丹麦等国参观那里的建筑，他们对于古建筑的保护和改造有着丰富经验。一位北欧专家的话非常打动我，他说建筑是有生命的，就像树一样，我们对于建筑的改造将作为一种经历，犹如树的年轮一般保存在它的生命里，我们今天所做的工作，一定会留下我们这个时代的印迹。

**《TheLINK》：将古宅改造成精品酒店有哪些需要注意的问题？您如何做到在保护古建筑的同时，也能为顾客创造舒适、优雅的生活环境？**

修复古宅是一件非常专业的事情，不同的古宅有着不同的保护标准，在这方面要多听取专家的意见，请教一些老工匠，尽量用古法去修复。我们在丽江所做的项目就是如此，后来我们的作品被评为丽江新民居改造的标杆。我们的理念和宗旨是挖掘、保护和继承，要将古宅中好的东西全部保留，而在装修和软装上充分考虑现代人的需求，也融合欧式的元素。例如，花间堂这个名字意味着在花丛中长出来的房子，我希望它是花团锦簇的，而丽江当地的习俗是整个庭院满铺石子，将花种在大缸里，于是我做了改造，尽量将植物种到地上，并运用东南亚的园林意境去处理庭院。我们起初就有意尝试这样的混搭，发展到江南一带，遇到改动自由度更大的宅子，试验也会更加大胆一些。

我们在苏州做的古宅曾经属于一位清朝的军机大臣。五六十年代，同济大学陈从周教授画出了苏州几座著名古宅的结构手稿。我们就依据这份手稿，严格按照建筑原本的结构进行修复。开业的时候，我们还做了一个修复古宅的工法展，例如，柱子要用麻布包裹，火漆漆七遍，还有铺瓦的工序和讲究。我们希望通过这个展览将对古宅的敬畏之情传递出去，让有机会接触古宅的人，能够更加郑重地对待它们。

her loneliness, and can also effortlessly connect and talk with people around her. I think the best embodiment of this idea is a place like the courtyard house. I included different ‘zones’ within our Blossom Hill Inns: movie room, study, yoga room, cafeteria, wine bar, etc. Our movie rooms are like the drawing rooms in our own house, our study is a place for reading, and our yard is for people to languidly have their afternoon tea. My initial idea was that this is my home; it’s just that I have a few extra rooms for visitors. Its entire structure is laid out like it would be at home.

***TheLINK: You have travelled abroad a lot. Did foreign architectural cultures inspire you during your work on Blossom Hill Inn?***

I studied in Japan when I was very young, and one of my deepest impressions about that country is that it is definitely naturally beautiful, but decorations are used to enhance that beauty. This left me with a sense of destiny. I hope to add to China’s natural beauty. I have also visited Nordic countries such as Finland and Denmark to experience the architecture there. The two countries have rich experience in the protection and renovation of ancient buildings. What struck me most were the remarks made by a Nordic expert. He said buildings have a life of their own, just like trees do. And so they view each architectural renovation as an event, one that will endure, like growth rings in the lives of trees. What we do today will certainly have an impact on the future.



***TheLINK: What are the factors that must be considered when converting ancient houses into premium hotels? How does one create a more comfortable living environment for clients while protecting the integrity of the original structure?***

Renovating an ancient house requires a high level of professionalism and it’s important to remember that different houses have different standards of protection. Compared to other restoration projects, you need to do a lot more consulting with experts, learn a lot more from experienced craftsmen, and try your best to use traditional methods during the renovation. That’s the approach we used for our first project in Lijiang, and what we did there became the criteria for the renovation of new urban residences in the city. Our philosophy, our goal, is to discover, protect and inherit, as we retain all these fine items in the ancient houses, while considering the modern needs of today’s clients when we make decisions about the buildings’ aesthetics. For example, the name Blossom Hill Inn refers to a house among flower blossoms, and I hoped we could have flowers everywhere. However, the local tradition in Lijiang homes is to have the entire grounds paved with gravel and flowers planted in huge vats. I changed this approach, planting the flowers in the ground, and giving the house a Southeast Asian touch. From the beginning we have been trying such combinations, and when we have houses where we have greater freedom to make changes, we make bolder attempts.

One of the old houses we restored in Suzhou belonged to a general from the Qing Dynasty. We made renovations strictly according to the original structures outlined in structural sketches, made in the 1950s and 1960s by Professor Chen Congzhou of Tongji University, of a few renowned ancient houses in Suzhou. When we opened our Suzhou location, we put on a display of the ancient craftsmanship involved in renovating old houses. For instance, pillars are to be wrapped in sackcloth and painted with sealing wax seven times. We also displayed the intricate procedures involved in tile laying. The goal of this display was to inspire awe of and respect for ancient houses.

《TheLINK》:您和创业伙伴之间的合作关系如何?您如何管理自己的团队?

我们几位一路走来的创业伙伴,是真正知道我们要什么的,每次做项目设计的时候,我们都会向设计师讲述一遍花间堂的企业文化,对方能够理解多少是一回事,更重要的是我们所有的参与者都能回顾一下自己的初心,审视手中的项目与最初的理想是否契合。我的个性比较坚持,但创业团队之间的合作很民主,在项目选择上我们非常审慎,实行一票否决制,只要有一位成员提出异议,大家可能就会选择放弃这个项目。

在员工管理上,公司创始人大多都读过中欧,能够运用科学的管理手段和管理工具,很多员工也是因为喜欢花间堂才加入进来的,因此公司的凝聚力和向心力都很不错。我们倾向于充分发挥团队的能动性,毕竟这是个性化的服务,如果束缚太多,工作就无法开展。我们对员工的授权很大很充分,但我也告诉过员工们一句话,“无论你对客人说了什么,承诺了什么,都代表是我说的,我都会替你埋单。”



《TheLINK》:在发展花间堂的过程中,有没有什么让您印象深刻的故事?

印象最深的是我在丽江看中的第一座院子。我测量了整个院子,将图纸交给一位新加坡的朋友,请他提些建议。他一听是丽江就欣然接受了这个任务,两星期后,他约我出来,交给我厚厚一叠打印文件,里面全是关于丽江的气候、历史、植物、石头、布料、图腾等的资料,他将丽江古城和四方街的风土人情研究得十分透彻。虽然那个改造方案后来由于种种原因搁浅了,但是在我刚刚做花间堂的时候,这位朋友确实给我上了一课。

为每个项目寻找切入点也是我们最花心思的地方。上个月我去同里考察一个项目——退思园主人修建的丽则女学。那是中国最早的一所女子学校,一座国家级的文物保护单位。虽然之前我也去过同里多次,但是当导游向我们细细讲述退思园主人的故事时,我的心里还是会有新的感动。这种感动给我以使命感,推动我去思考眼下的项目该怎么进行。其实不只是我,我们负责项目筹建的同仁们都会习惯性地深入思索这些问题,设计师也会通过他们的专业知识帮助我们打开思路和完善理念。

《TheLINK》:您在中欧读书的时候,结识了自己的创业伙伴,也得到了将梦想付诸实践的勇气,请问中欧给您最大的影响是什么?

在中欧读书的时光,是我职业和人生的转折期。在中欧的经历帮助我开阔了眼界,以前工作中积累的经验 and 困惑都找到了解答,我学习了更多的理论工具,也得到了更多的自信。在与同学的交流中,我有了追求事业的激情,同学和教授们的支持也给了我很多动力和勇气,可以说中欧对我影响至深。现在我经常会和别人说,我是中欧的,因为觉得这是一件值得骄傲的事情。

《TheLINK》:未来除了继续在中国发展,花间堂会不会涉足海外市场?

我希望将花间堂开到自己喜欢的国度去,比如美国和意大利。花间堂的宗旨和精神是最大限度地彰显所在地的文化,也许在国外的花间堂会是另外一种风景,但是路过的人一定会知道,那是一家中国女人所开的店。



***TheLINK:* You must rely on a great team of people to get these projects completed. How do you manage your team and how important is feedback and consensus from all the parties involved?**

We still have the same partners who were with us from the beginning; they truly understand our goals and needs. Each time we design a new project, we will brief the designers on the corporate culture of Blossom Hill Inn. How much of this they can fully grasp is, of course, important; but what's even more important is that all participants can look back at our original goal when we began this company, scrutinize the project at hand and weigh whether it fits with our initial set of ideals. I'm a determined person, that's my personality; but the collaboration among members of our team allows others to have a say. We are extremely prudent in the selection of projects, and we have a veto system so if one member votes against a project we may decide not to go ahead with it.

As for staff management, most of our co-founders studied at CEIBS, and they've been able to apply the business management skills learned in the classroom to their careers at Blossom Hill Inn. Many of our employees joined us because they fell in love with our inns, and so we have a strong sense of cohesion and unity among us. We tend to encourage team members to be actively engaged; after all we offer customized service which cannot be effective if there are too many rules and regulations. We give a fair amount of leeway to our employees. But I always remind them that, "whatever you say or promise to customers is on my behalf, and I'll do my best to make sure those promises are kept".

***TheLINK:* Looking back at the development of Blossom Hill Inn over the years, what are some of your most memorable moments?**

With the first house I found in Lijiang, I took the measurements of the entire yard and handed the blueprint to a Singaporean friend for him to give me some advice. When he heard it was Lijiang he accepted with pleasure. Two weeks later, he gave me a huge bundle of printed sheets containing info on Lijiang's weather, history, plants, stones, clothing and customs. Obviously he had studied the ancient city of Lijiang and the Square Street very thoroughly. Although the renovation project was dropped for various

reasons, he did give me a good lesson as I first entered Blossom Hill Inn. It's important to know even the tiniest details about an area when working on a project. That's the only way to be true to the original structure, to our history.

What we pay most attention to is finding an appropriate point of entry for a project. Last month I went to Tongli on an inspection tour for a project – Lize Girls' School which was built by the owner of Tuisi Garden. It was the first girls' school in China, and a national cultural relic. I had been to Tongli several times, but when the guide told us vivid stories about the master of Tuisi Garden, I got new inspiration, which gave me a sense of responsibility, driving me to think about how the current project can be improved. And it's not just about me. All the members of our preparatory work team will typically give great thought to these issues, and our designers will also use their expertise to help us broaden our horizon and improve our ideas.

***TheLINK:* You met a lot of your business partners at CEIBS and it's also where you nurtured the courage to pursue your dreams. In what other ways has CEIBS influenced you?**

My time at CEIBS was a turning point in my career, and in my life. My experiences at CEIBS helped me develop a broader outlook, and I found answers to all the difficulties and doubts I had accumulated in past jobs. I mastered more theoretical tools and developed greater confidence. Through my interaction with fellow students, I regained my passion for career success, and the support from my classmates and professors gave me a lot of motivation and courage. You can say that CEIBS has had the greatest influence on my life so far. Now I often tell people that I belong to CEIBS, and I say it with pride.

***TheLINK:* You have had great success in the China market, but this is understandable given the nature of your enterprise. Is there any plan to expand overseas?**

I hope to open more Blossom Hill Inns in countries that I like, such as the US and Italy. The theme and spirit of Blossom Hill Inns is to embody the local culture to the largest possible extent. Maybe Blossom Hill Inn will appear in another form in foreign countries, but those who live there will definitely know it's the work of a Chinese woman.