The Rockbund is a collection of historic buildings located just to the north of the world-famous Bund in central Shanghai. They represent examples of Shanghai’s Art Deco style, characteristic of the city’s late nineteenth and early twentieth century architecture in which European building styles were combined with Asian elements. The Rockbund project has seen the revitalisation of this area by a team of international architects. It accommodates offices, multiple hotels, apartments and retail premises while opening the area up to the grand urban gesture of the river front and its public park. David Chipperfield Architects was commissioned to restore, upgrade and convert eleven historic buildings within this wider development.

The buildings form a continuous street front along the eastern side of Yuanmingyuan Road and reflect the diversity of the colonial architecture of this period. During the course of their history the buildings had undergone various changes and adaptations. These were removed, and the buildings returned to their former state where feasible. The façades were carefully cleaned and repaired, maintaining as much of the original fabric as possible. Sensitive additions were added to some of the buildings to incorporate new functions.

The extensions to the National Industrial Bank (N.I.B.) and the building for the Royal Asiatic Society (R.A.S.) are visible from Museum Square, an inner courtyard located in the south-west part of the block. The new façades have been rendered using the same Shanghai plaster used on the adjoining buildings. The R.A.S. building, once China’s first public museum, now houses the Rockbund Art Museum, which is dedicated to contemporary art. Inside, newly created areas enable a range of different exhibition concepts to be accommodated, and the upper floors have been linked via a new atrium.

The Andrews & George Building marks the southern edge of the planning area and has become known as Rockbund 6. The three-storey listed façade has been preserved and renovated, and eleven storeys have been added in the form of a stacked masonry construction. This new, red brick tower forms a strong marker at the edge of the development, blending the historic urban fabric with the new high-rise city beyond.

Rockbund project

Project start 2006
Construction start 2009
Completion 2021
Gross floor area 35,500 m² historic buildings, 2,300 m² Rockbund Art Museum
Client Shanghai Bund de Rockefeller Group Master Development Co. Ltd.
Architect David Chipperfield Architects Berlin & Rep. office Shanghai
Partner / Director David Chipperfield, Mark Randel (Design lead)
Main representative Libin Chen
Project architects Lutz Schütter (Preparation and brief, Concept design), Thomas Spranger (Developed design, Design intent details, Site design supervision),
Project team Chuxiao Li and Thomas Benk (Site design supervision)
Markus Bauer, Kamlesh Bava, Mirjam von Busch, Belinda Chan, Andrea García Crespo, Maryla Duleba, Maik Engler, Dirk Gschwind, Michael Haverland, Frithjof Kahl, Fabian Körner, Nicolas Kulemeyer, Maoxue Li, Dahlia Liksaite, Fernando Gomez Martinez, Adrian Peach, Ilona Priwitzer, Martin Reichert, Mariska Rohde, Fransziska Rusch, Gunda Schulz, Lijun Shen, Daniel Sommer, Daniela Voss, Jiaying Wang, Boris Wolf, Liping Xu, Jiamong Yang
In collaboration with
Local design institute China Construction Design International, Shenzen (New buildings)
(Visit design to Construction supervision)
Lighting consultant Brandston Partnership Inc., Shanghai
Landscape architect Schlothfeldt Lichtplaner, Berlin (Rockbund Art Museum)