The Tongxian Gatehouse is located in Tongxian, China and was designed by NADAAA architectural firm in 2003. The Tongxian Gatehouse acts as a threshold into the Tongxian Art Center that is in development. The gatehouse frames the front of the pathway, creating a separation between the forested area and the industrial site near the complex. The main design parti of the Tongxian Gatehouse is to be a space that is reflective of its surroundings, creating a sense of community for the artists that live in Tongxian, China.

Before the complex was created the city did not have any place for local artists to gather and collaborate on artwork. As a result local artists decided to join together and buy land for a center were artists in the area could have a place to interact, present their work, and house receptions. The main art center acts as a place for the audience, while the gatehouse acts as a work environment containing two studio spaces and two living quarters (Sullivan). The original site was located in an area that acted as a division between the industrial site to the south and a natural forest to the north. A wall, which divided theses two sites, acted as a basis for the complex to be designed around. The forested area to the north was the main focal point for the art center and gatehouse, using windows to frame views of the scenic forest ("Tongzian Gatehouse 2003."). The gatehouse’s relation to its site helps strengthen the design parti and connection with the local area.

The design of the Tongxian Gatehouse has several main attributes that make up the most important parts of its design. First of which, is the cantilever that protrudes from the second story
and over the main access road. This allows the Gatehouse to act as a threshold, framing the entry of the complex as well as granting the residents extra room on the interior (“Tongzian Gatehouse 2003.”). Second, the Gatehouse contains windows that are oriented toward the art center to the west and the forest to the north, creating a connection between the gatehouse and these two areas. Third, the materials used in the construction of the gatehouse come from the local area, strengthening the idea of community. The designers decided to use materials from the sounding areas that included Chuzumu wood and local gray brick. Fourth, the designers used a technique that they called “the shrink wrapped stair” that minimizes wasted space in the gatehouse and provides corridor spaces to connect the studios with the living quarters (Sullivan). Fifth, the unique pattern of the brick reflects NADAAA’s “decidedly non-standard approach” to

(Top Left) Exterior of building showing the cantilever. (Top Middle) Windows on the top floor looking out over the forested site. (Top Right) Entrance to the building. (Bottom Right) Elevation and section of west side of Tongxian Gatehouse. (Bottom Right) The “Shrink-Wrapped” stairs are shown that reduce the amount of wasted space.
standard elements such as brick (Hensel). The brick pattern used in the Tongxian Gatehouse reflects other Chinese contemporary designs including the Gauchun building (Brick House Gaochun.). These design attributes all work together to establish a connection with the surrounding environment.

The spaces within the gatehouse are arranged and divided to create a hierarchy that places the studio spaces as the most important spaces in the building. The first floor contains a small foyer and mechanical room, but the bulk of the space is given up to the studio with its double high ceilings (Tehrani). The second floor is partially open to the studio below and contains the first of two living quarters. The second floor also contains a double high studio of the same size as that on the first floor as well as the first living quarters. Finally the third floor, which is also open to the studio below it, houses the second living quarters as well as a living room and kitchen facility. By placing the living quarters on the top most floors and the studios on the first two, the designers give priority to the studio spaces allowing any visitor to the space to view the art that the inhabitants of the gatehouse are working on (Bibb). This tells us a great deal about the hierarchy of the private studio spaces and the intimate living quarters.

The last space that guests reach during the procession of the gatehouse is the living room on the top floor that allows people to see out over the forested landscape to the north. This arrangement of spaces reflects the program of Tongxian Gatehouse studio spaces and its connection with the surrounding environment.

The Tongxian Gatehouse in China, designed by NADAAA, was created to connect with the art center and the larger site around it. It accomplishes this through use of material, spacial arrangement, selected views, and form that created a unified parti for the building.


