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# TOPSIDE

## Stage of Forest Jilin, Songhua Lake, China META-Project

Photography by Su Shengliang



Claiming an unsurpassed site high above Songhua Lake in China, this little building holds almost no programme other than to enhance – if that's even possible – appreciation of the vistas. It is a viewing platform, facing a truly sublime panorama of layered mountains stretching toward an infinite horizon, the lake nestled far below like an out-of-reach crystal. Skiers ply the snowy hillsides beside the building during winter, and in summer, the green slopes become a nature (and hiker's) paradise. Stage of Forest serves both.

META-Project spent plenty of time studying the site (tough work assignment!) to position the little building just so, minimising interruptions to the surrounding

natural beauty, not to mention ski runs. It thrusts out from a small clump of forest trees, in a bold cantilever set upon a concrete base. The form, which is vaguely triangular in shape, opens broadly toward the view, while curving sensuously at its 'back' point in a hint of what it momentarily obscures. The parti utilises two pieces: the concrete support base and the upper fan-shaped one, which is clad in attractive, charred shingles. Its roof rises up very slightly to one corner. The shingled skin peels back at the blind corner to unveil a glass aperture protecting a honey-toned timber surface. The two cantilevered front corners appear more dramatic from the rear, as if this wood creature were just taking off from its concrete nest.





You approach Stage of Forest through the trees along a carefully set out timber pathway. This is to initiate the experience precisely, letting the building itself block the view you're there to see. You enter the concrete stub, climb a stair and arrive at a suitable climax: a giant open-faced loggia seemingly resting on the edge of the world. The raw red cedar that wraps the surfaces here is hardy and nicely contrasts with the grey tones of the outside shell and the concrete staircase. A glass balustrade runs along the front, and two oval openings pierce the floor and the ceiling, offering sunlight and snow from above, and a glazed peephole to below. That's all there is.

And all there needs to be. META-Project know full well when to stop, lest they mess up a very good thing. The pavilion can be used for all sorts of things, from parties to events, lessons to exhibitions, but it's really there for only one reason: for the visitor to be awed by the place, humbled by nature, and impressed by talent.

