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Taipei

A neighborhood awakens

Taipei's once-forgotten Dadaocheng is back in business, as old enterprises reinvent themselves for those seeking a truly nostalgic experience



WHAT'S ON

Explore Taipei and beyond with these April events



Creative Expo Taiwan

This event will bring back local designers to Huashan 1914 Creative Park and Songshan Cultural and Creative Park from April 18 to 22. Expect leather bags, ceramics and homewares. creativexpo.tw

Taiwan Adventure Outings

This company brings visitors to under-explored beaches, waterfalls and mountains. This April, they're organizing activities that include a hike and yoga session in Yangmingshan. taoutings.com

NEIGHBORHOOD

The sweet odor of pastries and roasted tea wafts through Dadaocheng's banyan tree-lined streets. A Qing dynasty-era hub for trade, this western Taipei neighborhood was forgotten in the late 20th century as high-rises sprung up in other parts of the city. However, this is now changing, and today the area buzzes with a new entrepreneurial spirit, thanks to its young creatives.

"Young people nowadays are obsessed with the past," says Lance Han of **Dot Design Labs**. His showroom is housed in a tall, beige-tiled building with gray Baroque pillars and balconies, a common architectural style here. Shelves display Han's designs, including lunchboxes made with walnut wood and chopsticks made of bamboo. "I love the idea of elevating household items," Han says.

As design studios moved in, other places reinvented themselves. One such enterprise is Lin Mao Sen. The century-old tea factory's new floor-to-ceiling windows and black panels exude sophistication, but details hint at tradition. The amber-colored signage matches the hue of tea leaves, while the interlaced woven bamboo ceiling symbolizes nets used to sieve tea.

"Old materials like bamboo evoke nostalgia," says Onion Yang, creative director of Ahead Concept, the design studio hired to renovate the store in 2016. Yang explains that for Taiwanese people, the word *xin* or "new" does not necessarily mean modern, but also "preserving the past in a way that's artful".

This is also the case for **Hoshing 1947**, an understated pastry shop on Dihua Street. Here, third-generation pastry chef Ren Chia-lun makes pastries inspired by those her grandfather used to make when he moved to Taipei from Shanghai in 1947. "People don't really eat sweets anymore," Ren observes. "I make updated versions of the sweets I ate at home as a child."

Though most customers enjoy her crumbly walnut puff pastries and fluffy, jam-flavored sesame rice cakes, Ren says some customers are bemused. "They'll ask for coffee and I'll tell them we only serve tea and pastries." This doesn't bother her, though. "It's an opportunity to teach them about the neighborhood's history and culture." **ddoott**.

com; linmaosen.com; hoshing1947.com.tw
- Dana Ter

