

The HSBC Building in Shanghai: Diverse Styles of Ornament and the Construction of a Financial Empire

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Abstract : The 1923 HSBC Building is one of the landmarks of Shanghai's Bund complex and is described as "one of the finest buildings from the Suez Canal to the Bering Strait". Mr George Leopold Wilson of Palmer&Turner and his design team combine the latest British design taste with Chinese elements and bring the high standard of London manufacturing to Shanghai. This paper reviews the establishment background and construction process of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank Corporation in Shanghai, and analyzes the characteristics of various styles and ornament of HSBC. At the same time, using the research method of iconography, compared with Britain's exploration of modern design mode in the early 20th century, we can deeply understand how this "monument of world commerce and prosperity" realizes the identity construction of its financial empire in the Far East in the perfect combination of practicality and artistry.

Keywords : early 20-century Shanghai, the bund, the HSBC building, classical styles, ornament, identity construction

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