

ARCH 5111

CONDITION / REAL VILLAGES: Rethinking China's Countryside

2017-18 Term I

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DESCRIPTION

"Architects don't invent anything, they transform reality. Architecture does not have a pre-established language nor does it establish a language. It is a response to a concrete problem, a situation of transformation" (Siza, 2015)

This Design Research Studio looks at the possibilities of rethinking abandoned rural Chinese villages and capitalizing on a disappearing rural culture. After the catastrophic effects on urban heritage, modernization is now in the process of decimating most of China's rural villages. By designing "real" projects for the abandoned village of Hexin Wu (何新屋), located in Guangdong Province, China, our ambition is to present an alternative way to re-think the issue. To challenge conventional preservation paradigms, instigated by a national rural heritage policy focused on introducing tourism as a rural solution. In short, we aim to make these abandoned villages operational again.

By conceiving the village as an ecosystem, students will design a series of "real" prototypes with associated implementation strategies. "Real" in this context relates to showing sensibility and practicality to deliver a series of proposals that can be achieved (financially) and implemented (buildable) by the community. In this context, Hexin Wu village represents an example of a Chinese village, rich in heritage, not deemed worthy of preservation. An abundant number of villages of this kind exist, all of which are confronted with a dark reality: i.e. face certain extinction or lose their soul by giving way to the practice of "Disneyfication", a form of architectural conservation that mutates villages into an architectural taxidermy museum.

The studio is organized around a series of discussions, an exploration of thoughts via spatial proposals. The design process will be done through models, vis-à-vis understanding design through three-dimensional exploration. Drawings will be removed from the design process and only introduced in the last phase of the project, conceived as a survey of the designed space. Students will work in teams of three, conjuring a strategic scheme from which an individual project will develop. Finally, by working in a real village, which requires tangible solutions the aim of the studio is to rekindle a connection between the Design Studio (within architecture education) and social responsibility. Architecture improves people's lives; student's projects should not be confined to a remote hard disk or worse a landfill site but should be pushed into the real world to make an impact on society.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Studio are to develop an architectural design knowledge and skills with the emphasis on the on the following topics:

1. Apply design thinking to real-world projects
2. Understand team dynamics, develop collaborative skills
3. Develop design project implementation skills
4. Develop confidence in presenting creative design solutions

5. Develop a design approach that differentiates between architectural idea and form
6. Develop prototype solutions through model making
7. Develop practical material knowledge
8. Understand the importance of failure in design thinking, honour your errors.
9. Acquire proficiency in developing an architectural argument from idea to spatial proposal
10. Acquire deep understanding concerning Chinese rural villages

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this one-semester course, it is intended that students develop the following skills and capacities:

1. Ability to undertake a focused and analytical study into a new research topic.
2. Ability to adapt and react and understand the cultural and sociological implications of the site.
3. Ability to formulate a critical position regarding rural villages.
4. Ability to perform a comprehensive site analysis from macro to micro.
5. Ability to translate an abstract concept into an architectural design proposal, through a defined process of empirical testing.
6. Ability to use photography as a design tool to articulate their design.
7. Ability to develop a set of architectural drawings that explains the project's intention

COURSE SYLLABUS

The course is organized into 4 phases, each lasting 3 weeks.

Phase 1 Context

1.1_Background: Macro and Micro, Historical, Geographical and Social. Present discussion, Case studies

1.2_Mission: Design thinking before the site visit

1.3_Workshop 1: Site Visit. Guest: Prof. Ling Cai GZU

Deliverables:

- i. Group model 1:500 including context

Phase 2 Village Vision

2.1_Empathy: Listen to the Community

2.1_Possibilities: Rapid Spatial Experiments

2.3_Workshop 2: Reframe the Problem. Guest: Prof. Tat Lam CUHK (Midterm, 22-25.10.18)

Deliverables:

- i. Group model 1:200

Phase 3 Spatial Prototypes

3.1_Indetify three sites and associated interventions

3.2_Investigate space light and material

3.3_Generate a series of Scenarios

3.4_Technical Issues: Exterior/Interior and Sustainability

3.5_Workshop 3: Construction and Space. Guest: Prof. John Lin HKU

Deliverables:

- i. Solo model 1:50/1:25

Phase 4 Sythesize

4.1_Survey the final model to produce a set of architectural drawings. Plans and Sections

4.2_Photograph all models in black and white

4.3_Final Review 07.12.18

Deliverables:

- i. Drawings set at 1:100
- ii. 8x (100x100) Panels. 4 drawings, 4 photographs.

ASSESSMENT SCHEME

Assessment will be carried out as follows:

1. 50% for final review
2. 20% for mid-term review
3. 30% for research, design process and creativity*

*Definitions:

Research - Ability to understand and contextualize the background to the specific design agenda.

Design Process – Ability to interrogate design proposals through empirical model making experiments

Creativity – Ability to rethink the conventional and to challenge preconceived design notions

FEEDBACK FOR EVALUATION

CTE Survey, Internal mid-term course evaluation, External Reviewer Comments, etc.

FIELD TRIP

The studio will visit the village of Hexin Wu (何新屋), located in Guangdong Province during the last week of September. We will travel by coach and be accompanied by professor Ling Cai from GZU. We will meet the villagers and stay in the area for three days. The trip will be subsidized by the school via the student travel allocation.

REQUIRED READINGS

These are books you should read:

Abraham, A. (2015). *A New Nature: 9 Architectural Conditions between Liquid and Solid*. Zurich: Lars Muller Publications.

Albert C Smith. (2004). *Architectural Model as Machine*. Oxford: Elsevier.

Alexander, C., Ishikawa, S., & Silverstein, M. (1977). *A Pattern Language*. New York: Oxford University Press.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

These are books you might wish to read:

Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin Books.

Bolchover, J., & Lin, J. (2014). *Rural Urban Framework: Transforming the Chinese Countryside*. Basel: Birkhäuser.

Bolchover, J., Lange, C., & Lin, J. (2013). *Homecoming: Contextualizing, Materializing and Practicing the Rural in China*. Berlin: Gestalten.

Ellrichshausen, P. V. (2016). *Spatial Structures*. Copenhagen: Architectural Publisher.

Ferretto, P. W. (2017). *Adapting Villages: An Architectural Framework For Regenerating Dong Minority Settlements*. S.Arch 4th International Conference 2017. Hong Kong.

Frampton, K. (2017, January). *Wemcun Village*. *Domus*, pp. 64-65.

- Heidegger, M. (1971). Building Dwelling Thinking. In Poetry, Language, Thought. New York.
- Latour, B. (1993). We Have Never Been Modern. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Messmer, M., & Chuang, H.-M. (2013). China's Vanishing Worlds: Countryside, Traditions and Cultural Spaces. Cambridge: MIT.
- Rudofsky, B. (1964). Architecture without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture. New York: Doubleday & Company.
- Sennett, R. (2012). Together: the rituals, pleasures, and politics of cooperation. . New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Siza, A. (2015). Architects don't invent, they transform. Architectural Review, Issue 1416.
- Till, J. (2013). Architecture Adapts. Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

IMPORTANT NOTE TO STUDENTS

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is required in all courses. For an excused absence, the instructor must be notified and presented with documentation of illness or personal matter. Please note: **Three (3)** or more unexcused absences may result in a failing grade for the course.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>. With each assignment, students may be required to submit a statement that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

STUDENT WORK:

Submission of studio documentation must be complete and correctly formatted. Missing or incomplete submission of the documentation folder will result in the grade for the course being withheld. This will prevent registration for the following term or delay graduation. In addition, a grade deduction of *one letter grade* will be made.

SCHEDULE

Please see attached.