

C H I N A | S T U D I O

M.ARCH. TRAVEL STUDIO | Fall 2019 | Prof. Jennifer Lee Michaliszyn



RESEARCH QUESTION

Rural redevelopment is a timely topic in China. After a 25-year period of investment in rapid urbanization and global architecture in the major cities, there is renewed interest in China in the outlying and smaller towns and villages. The villages have experienced a generation of decline as people have moved to cities for economic opportunity, traditional craft and industries have atrophied and historic architecture has been abandoned to deteriorate. What role can new architecture play in the cultural and economic revitalization of a village? How can cultural and building practices be continued and reinterpreted for the current day? How can a village leverage cultural heritage tourism for economic benefit while avoiding some of its pitfalls?

Research themes may include:

Everyday cultural practices – the rituals and patterns of daily life. This relates to street culture, porosity and material reuse below.

Street culture – the street as a lively gathering space, with a spectrum of public, semi-public, semi-private to private spaces

Quotidian architecture – or modern vernacular or informal architecture. I.e. Self-built houses, structures, additions.

Applied infrastructure - additive improvements over time to mechanical, electrical and plumbing services

Traditional architecture – the traditional architecture of the Ji-an-nan region.

Porosity - residents bring bamboo chairs out on to the street after dinner on warm evenings, to cool down, and to socialize. We relate porosity to urban connectivity, and passive cooling.

Material reuse - ingeniously constructed assemblages of building materials are often built and kept for possible future use. Also the work of Wang Shu, who won the Pritzker Prize in 2012. Wang's work is defined by a sense of place and material re-use.

Ruins - recent Chinese artists' responses to the widespread demolition of older urban fabric in the wake of rapid urbanization; often working with the debris or sites of demolished buildings.

Local craft – the region is known for tin and copper working.

STUDY SITE

The study site for the studio is Zhiying village, near Yongkang city in Zhejiang Province in Southeast China, about three hours by high speed rail to the southwest of Shanghai. The settlement dates back to before the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), and about 43% of the structures are considered "traditional". The village is about 0.68km², with about 0.08km² built area. The population is 1065. Industries include agriculture and metalworking.

Zhiying village has kept the urban structure of the Ming Dynasty, with 8 north-south alleys and 10 east-west alleys. Zhiying is distinguished by its unusually high number of temples (used as civic halls) and also has a number of old courtyard style dwellings.

GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT | INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

This is studio collaboration with Shanghai University. Wentworth students will participate in joint site analysis and pin-up with Shanghai University architecture students and Professors Liu Yong, Xiao Rong and Zhang Wei while in China, hold digital reviews during the semester, and reunite in November for the final review when the Chinese faculty (hopefully) come to the Boston. The Shanghai University Design Institute has set up the study with the Zhiying government, arranged for students to engage with the government and local people, and have prepared detailed documentation of the site. In the past, the studio has been focused on the urban design scale. This year projects will be at the architectural, material and detail scale. The intention is also for students to work in groups.

OUTCOMES

The studio will produce a digital and print publication to be shared with partners and stakeholders.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING | TRAVEL

We will spend 10-11 days in the China. In addition to the time spent in Zhiying, we may take day trips to visit other old towns nearby, such as Hangzhou. Students will also spend time in Shanghai and see architecture from the different time periods of the city's history, including the Bund and the Pudong new area.

PROGRAM COST

The airfare cost is \$746, payable directly online to Student Universe travel agency. The estimated program cost is \$1,684, payable to the Department of Architecture. The total is \$2430, and includes accommodations, local transportation, at least one group dinner and entry fees. It also includes visa application and expediting fees based on requirements for U.S. citizens. Students are responsible for researching any necessary visas and related additional fees for, or restrictions against, travel to China, per their nationality.

(I am very sorry to say that nationals of, those born in, or those with entry or exit stamps from Turkey or Pakistan are likely to be rejected for a visa to China for this kind of trip.)