CRITICAL PRACTICE IN AN AGE OF COMPLEXITY - AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CRITIQUE OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

• Paper / Proposal Title:
  Lost Urban Conditions of Hong Kong: The Infrastructural spaces of the Mei Foo Housing Estate

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  Written paper

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• Abstract (300 words):
  This article investigates the "Lost" urban conditions of Hong Kong, exploring how under-used infrastructural space can become integrated into everyday community life. Lost spaces refer to by-product urban spaces that are typically forgotten and neglected by architects and urban planners, but are increasingly being studied and analyzed by academics and professionals as sites for potential development. As one of the most high-density cities in the world, Hong Kong offers numerous infrastructural conditions that arise from its highly engineered territory, each presenting insight into potential architectural strategies for development.

  The Kwai Chuang Road bisects the Mei Foo housing estate (1969), connecting Kowloon with the Tsuen Wan district of Hong Kong. An apparent negative environment, vis-à-vis: noise, pollution, light, is transformed into a public asset. The residual space below the highway becomes inhabited by a multitude of public amenities and events: community
center, wet food market and copious local businesses all serving the more than 50,000 inhabitants of the estate. In many ways, the Mei Foo infrastructural inhabitation is a perfect example of how Hong Kong’s urban density gives rise to ingenious and spontaneous spatial transformations where typically redundant parts of the city become integral to the community.

It is critical today to challenge how cities develop; preconceived urban design solutions have become anachronistic and predictable. Engaging directly with infrastructure spaces is a relatively underexplored field which is fast developing without the direct participation of architects and planners. The Mei Foo Estate as well as Hong Kong generally, offer direct examples of how cities can adapt and invent new forms of public engagement. Rather than design new conditions, it is time to adapt existing situations, to this effect Hong Kong has a lot to teach.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Jing Luo is a PhD student at the School of Architecture in The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), where she also serves as a teaching assistant and research assistant in architectural design. She received her Bachelor of Architecture from Xi’an University of Architecture & Technology in 2012 and Master of Architecture from Cranbrook Academy of Art in 2014. Her design works have been selected by Mercedes- Baz Art Gallery and later published in the book of “Experiencing Perspectives”. She has practised architecture as well as furniture design in New York and later taught design studio for both Year-2 and Year-3 undergraduate students at the School of Architecture in Chang’an University in China before starting her doctoral program in Hong Kong. Advised by Prof. Peter W. Ferretto, her research interests focusing on investigating urban residual conditions via prototype designs.

Peter W. Ferretto was born in Manchester in 1972. He graduated from both Cambridge and Liverpool Universities. He worked as a registered Architect (ARB) for several international architectural practices, including Herzog & de Meuron in Basel, before establishing his own firm, PWFERRETTO in 2009 (Seoul). Peter started his academic career as a Unit Master at the Architectural Association in London where he also directed the Seoul Visiting School. In 2009, he was appointed Assistant Professor of Architecture at Seoul National University in Korea, until he joined the Chinese University of Hong Kong as an Associate Professor of Design and Practice since 2014. Peter’s main research focus is the relationship between architectural design and the city. He has written many essays on architecture and the city, and is also the author of several books such as Place/Seoul (2015) and Architectural Notes (2014). In 2016, he was awarded the General Research Fund (GRF) by the Research Grants Council of Hong Kong, for his project titled “Urban Pauses: Reclaiming Hong Kong’s Residual Urban Spaces”. At the
Chinese University of Hong Kong, Peter is currently serving as the Director of the Master of Architecture (MArch) programme.