

Experimental Identity China

Architects: Atelier Deshaus, Atelier FCJZ, Jiakun Architects, RUF (Rural Urban Framework), TAO (Trace Architecture Office), Vector Architects

Opening: August 3, 2024, 15:00-18:00

Exhibition: August 3 - August 24, 2024

Organizers:

SCAA (Swiss-Chinese Chamber of Architects and Artists), Zürich, Switzerland

Galerie Met, Berlin, Germany

EXPERIMENTAL, Porto, Portugal

The Galerie Met, in collaboration with Experimental and the SCAA (Swiss-Chinese Chamber of Architects and Artists), is pleased to announce the architectural exhibition “*Experimental Identity China*,” on view from August 3 through August 24, 2024.

The exhibition showcases approximately 18 projects designed by six dynamic Chinese architectural practices: Atelier Deshaus, Atelier FCJZ, Jiakun Architects, RUF (Rural Urban Framework), TAO (Trace Architecture Office), and Vector Architects.

After a long period of centralized production of architectural works, often overlooked internationally for lacking originality and pluralism, the paradigm of Chinese architecture is rapidly changing. Young and smaller practices are emerging across the country, bringing a diverse and unique range of ideas to the forefront. Their work spans from rural areas to the most populated cities, encompassing everything from tea houses to entire villages. The rich cultural history inherent in the various regions of China provides a fertile base for these offices’ architectural exploration.

The exhibition delves into topics such as the contrasting climate conditions from north to south, the diverse traditional techniques specific to each region, and the relationship with Western culture, all of which deeply influence the work of this new generation of architects.

Through interviews, models, floor plans, and other graphical content, the exhibition explores how these six architectural practices address these topics and highlights the fascinating work they have produced.

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Atelier Deshaus:

Founded in 2001, Atelier Deshaus is one of the earliest independent architectural firms in China. Its co-founders and principal architects now are Liu Yichun and Chen Yifeng. They both graduated from Tongji University, currently living and working in Shanghai. Liu Yichun also acts as a visiting professor at Tongji University, as well as a regular columnist for the *Architectural Journal* and the *Architect*.

Their Shanghai-based studio began by working mainly on public buildings such as kindergartens, schools and museums, attracting international recognition and winning numerous awards. The studio was listed in the ‘2011 Design Vanguard’ by Architectural Record, and its most representative project, the Long Museum in Shanghai’s West Bund, won the Architectural Review’s Award for Emerging Architecture, the Gold Prize in the ASC Architecture Creation Awards for Public Architecture

in 2016, the Honor Award Best in Show for Architecture 2019 from AIA's China Chapter, ARCASIA Awards for Architecture 2020, Gold Winner (Public Amenity: Social and Cultural Buildings), etc.

Atelier Deshaus has also been invited to participate in many international architecture and art exhibitions, including 'Alors, La Chine?' at Centre Pompidou in 2003, 'Eastern Promises' at the MAK Austrian Museum of Applied Arts in 2013, the London Design Museum in 2015, 'ZAI XING TU-MU: Sixteen Chinese Galleries and Fifteen Chinese Architects' at the Aedes Architecture Forum in Berlin in 2016, and "Reuse, Renew, Recycle: Recent Architecture from China" at MoMA in 2022. It has held solo exhibitions including "Sensitive Urbanity: Atelier Deshaus in Shanghai" at the RIBA London Headquarters in 2022, and "Common Landscape: Re-cultivating Industrial Sites" at the Aedes Architecture Forum in Berlin in 2023.

Atelier FCJZ:

Atelier Feichang Jianzhu (FCJZ) was founded by Yung Ho Chang and Lu Lijia in 1993 and one of the first independent architectural practices in China. In the past three decades, FCJZ has on one hand developed a ontological position of architecture, specifically making buildings responding to the conditions of contemporary Chinese cities with completed projects with scales ranging from experimental houses, coffee shops and pavilions in park to industrial parks, high-rise towers, and university campuses, such as the Four Studio-Houses in Ningbo, the Glass House Coffee in Shanghai, the ChunYangTai Cultural Center in Guangzhou, the Nantou Community Center in Shenzhen, the China Academy of Art Liangzhu Campus in Hangzhou, to name a few. On the other hand, FCJZ treats design as interventions in the tangible world in general and ventures into diverse disciplines, including furniture, products, tapestry, stage, clothes, jewelry, etc.

FCJZ has received numerous honors and awards, such as the Progressive Architecture Citation (1996); WA China Architecture Award (2004); Business Week / Architectural Record China Award (2006) for Villa Shizilin; the 100+ Best Architecture Firms (2019) by Domus magazine; American Institute of Architects (AIA) 2020 Architecture Award for Jishou Art Museum and the ArchDaily China Building of the Year 2020 Award.

The Atelier has held solo exhibitions at Apex Art in New York (1999), Harvard Design School (2002) and MIT SAP (2007) in Cambridge, UCCA in Beijing (2012), PSA in Shanghai (2016), and most recently at Pingshan Art Museum in Shenzhen (2021). In 2008 FCJZ was invited to create a large-scale installation at the central court of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. It has also participated in numerous international art and architecture exhibitions and biennales, including six times at Venice Biennale. Products, installations, and architectural models by FCJZ are held in the permanent collections of the V&A Museum, the Echigo-Tsumari Land Art Triennale in Japan, the National Art Museum of China in Beijing, OCAT and Pingshan Art Museum in Shenzhen, as well as M+ in Hong Kong.

Jiakun Architects:

Jiakun Architects was founded by Jiakun Liu in 1999. Since then, Jiakun Architects has continuously organized and also participated in various international collaborations and exhibitions. As a multidisciplinary office, Jiakun Architects has been working with clients from different countries. It is not only specialized in architectural design, but also large-scale planning, urban design, landscape design, interior design, product design and installation art. With a focus on social reality, Jiakun Architects always insists that architecture, which is in respect of tradition and vernacular, is the symbiosis with nature.

With a focus on social reality and a respect for local context and vernacular craftsmanship, Jiakun Liu aims to solve contemporary architectural issues with a sense of realism - an approach inspired by folk wisdom - for each project. His vision remains open to China's multi-traditions. Having the faith in the compatibility of tradition and modernity, Liu devotes himself

to translating traditional Chinese cultural ethos into contemporary architectural language, which represents a fine quality of intertexture between individual and collective memories. His exploration of a suitable technical approach in architecture is purely a logical continuation of his professional work on how to serve the people in need. Many of these projects throw light on the reciprocal relation between Chinese people's public life and urban cultural space.

Liu's projects had exhibited at the 15th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, the 56th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia and many other international exhibitions. Meanwhile, Liu designed first international Pavilion of Serpentine Galleries (London)' acclaimed Pavilion Commission programme 2018 in Beijing. He has been longlisted on many domestic and international architectural awards - the Honor Prize of the 7th ARCASIA, Chinese Architecture & Art Prize 2003, Far East Award in Architecture and Architectural Design Award from Architectural Society of China, WAN Civic Award, German Design Award, 2022 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage, etc. He has been invited to lecture at Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, MIT, Royal Academy of Arts, Palais de Chaillot in Paris and many top institutions in China.

RUF (Rural Urban Framework):

In 2005 the Chinese government announced its plan to urbanize half of the remaining 700 million rural citizens by 2030. Around the same time, recognizing that the rural is at the frontlines of the urbanization process, John Lin and Joshua Bolchover established Rural Urban Framework (RUF), a research and design collaborative based at The University of Hong Kong. Conducted as a non-profit organization providing design services to charities and NGOs, RUF has built or is currently engaged in various projects in diverse villages throughout China and Mongolia. They have developed design strategies for schools, community centers, hospitals, village houses, infrastructure, and town planning which would not otherwise be possible in the commercial sector. As a result of this active engagement, RUF has been able to research the links between social, economic, political processes and the physical transformation of each village.

The research and design of Rural Urban Framework has been acquired by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Design Museum, London and the Canadian Center for Architecture, Montreal. RUF is the recipient of over 40 international design awards including most recently, the RIBA International Emerging Architect Award and the Ralph Erskine 100 Years Anniversary Award given for innovation in architecture that "primarily benefits the less privileged in society".

TAO (Trace Architecture Office):

Trace Architecture Office (TAO), one of the most active and influential architectural firms in China's contemporary architecture field, was founded by architect HUA Li In 2009, and is based in Beijing. Being critical at contemporary architecture as an obsession to fashionable forms in media-driven globalized consumerism, TAO visions architecture as an evolving organism, being an inseparable whole with its environment, rather than just a formal object. With most projects positioned in particular cultural and natural settings in China, TAO explore the essence of place; make architecture deeply rooted in its cultural and environmental context with respect of local condition. The sense of place, response to climate, efficient use of local resource, site-responsive construction method, such issues are always explored in every TAO project responding to its specific situation. TAO's works have been exhibited internationally in Venice, Berlin, Vienna and New York.

Born in 1972 in China, HUA Li received his B.Arch. from Tsinghua University in 1994. He then studied at Yale University and received his M. Arch. in 1999. He practiced in New York and Beijing before founding Trace Architecture Office (TAO) in 2009. HUA Li was also elected into Chartered Membership of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). HUA Li and TAO's key works include: Museum of Handcraft Paper, XiaoQuan Elementary School, Wuyishan Bamboo Raft Factory, For-

est Building, Split Courtyard House, Tienstiens Café, Lens Office Beijing, Xinzhai Coffee Manor, Huandao Middle School, Xiadi Paddy Field Bookstore of Librairie Avant-Garde, Songshan Lake Science and Technology Convention Center project and Shenzhen Mangrove Wetland Museum. HUA Li and TAO has won several important architectural awards including Design Vanguard 2012 and GDGB China Awards by Architectural Record Magazine, Young Architect Award of 2012 China Architecture Media Awards, ARCASIA Awards for Architecture and WA Awards, shortlisted in Aga Kahn Award 2013, nominated in BSI Swiss Architectural Award 2016 & 2018. Hua Li taught at Tsinghua University and China Central Academy of Fine Arts as a visiting professor. He now teaches at the University of Hong Kong as an adjunct professor, and has been a guest critic for studio reviews at University Arts Berlin, the University of Hong Kong and Tianjin University. He has given lectures in many domestic and overseas universities and international architectural conferences in both Asia and Europe.

Vector Architects:

DONG Gong founded Vector Architects in 2008. He was elected as the Foreign Member of French Academy of Architecture in 2019. He has been teaching design studios at Tsinghua University and Central Academy of Fine Arts, and was appointed as the Plym Distinguished Visiting Professor at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Visiting Professor at Polytechnic University of Turin, Italy.

During the sixteen years of practice, among the miscellaneous clues in architecture, Vector Architects focuses intensely on the issues of Site, Light, and Making. They still have faith in the primitive, tranquil, and eternal power embodied within architecture itself. Architecture is a medium to closely connect ourselves physically, mentally, and emotionally with the world we live in. In their view, this is the courage as well as the ultimate responsibility that architecture should have.

Vector Architects has been invited to exhibit at the 2018 “FREESPACE” Venice Biennale Arsenale International Exhibition and the first Chinese architectural exhibition at MoMA New York. Their works have been permanently collected by Center Pompidou and MoMA. They have also won numerous international awards, including “The Gold Award of ARCASIA Award for Architecture”; “RIBA International Awards for Excellence”; “100+ Best Architecture Firms” selected by Domus; nominated for the Swiss Architectural Award.

Vector Architects’ representative works include Seashore Library, Seashore Chapel, Yangshuo Sugarhouse, Renovation of the Captain’s House, Pingshan Art Museum, Changjiang Art Museum, Luxelakes Floating Headquarters, Haibing Center of Nankai University, Jingyang Camphor Court, and Liyuan Foreign Language Primary School.