

PICTURESQUE MODERNITIES

ARCHITECTURAL REGIONALISM AS A GLOBAL PROCESS (1890-1950)

International Conference
(Paris, 30 November – 2 December 2016)

German Center for Art History Paris
Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context", Heidelberg University
Centre André Chastel (University Paris-Sorbonne)
CRIHAM (University of Poitiers)
Association française des Historiens de l'Architecture (A.H.A.)

Regionalism and Domestic Architecture in Treaty-port Tianjin, China

Elizabeth LaCouture
Colby College, Waterville, ME USA

Abstract

The northern Chinese city Tianjin became a treaty-port in 1860 and was home to nine foreign concessions until the end of World War II. Concessions were established to the south of the late imperial era Chinese city, and each concession had its own municipal government that planned roads, established neighborhoods, and set building regulations. By the 1930s, a Chinese person living in the northern city Tianjin could view a late imperial Chinese government office, an Italian revival Consular building, a Japanese Shinto shrine, a French Beaux Arts bank, or the British Gothic municipal building in a single day, simply by taking a walk. While competing nationalisms defined Tianjin municipal architecture, a regional Tianjin style emerged in domestic architecture. A Chinese industrialist in the British Concession, for example, built a modernist brick house with a Chinese pavilion affixed to the roof, while a Chinese resident of the old Chinese city built a new courtyard house that included a two-story European-style villa as one of its bays.

This paper explores how and why a regional architectural style developed in Tianjin housing during the first half of the twentieth-century. The material conditions of the city and its architecture informed a palate that inspired the deliberate mixing of so-called Chinese tradition with Western modern. Not only did Tianjin have more foreign concessions than any other Chinese city, but it is located only 140 kilometers from the imperial capital Beijing, and had been a local administrative center under the Qing. Tianjin regionalism was also as Harwell Hamilton Harris defines it "a state of mind." Thus, this paper will explore how Tianjin writers in women's magazines described a Tianjin regionalism when discussing interior design. Finally, this paper will consider regionalism in Tianjin housing as a form of local Chinese resistance against the multiple nationalisms of foreign colonialisms, the Euro-universalisms of modernity and the collectivism of a new Chinese nationalism.



British Concession – European modern style house with Chinese-style garden pavilion on roof (LaCouture)

Website for the 2016 Conference: http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/global_regionalism