Construction of Chineseness in architecture through translation from the late nineteenth century to 1978

CHAN, Man Ha Sylvia
Part-time from May 2013 to December 2015, Full-time since January 2016
Research Track: History and Theory of Architecture and Urbanism
Supervisor: Dr. ROSKAM, Cole
Co-supervisor: Dr. ZHU, Tao

Dissertation Abstract

Chineseness in architecture has multiple definitions. This project traces how Chineseness in architecture was shaped by the shifting sociopolitical conditions of China from the late Qing dynasty to 1978, as China transformed from an imperial country into a modern nation. This project focuses on how architectural discourses in China translated foreign ideas of modern architecture to define modern Chineseness, as the idea of architecture as a discipline was imported into China from Europe, the US, and Japan from the mid-nineteenth century. This project analyzes how Chineseness defined in the discourses was translated into architectural production, and vice versa. The multiple notions of Chineseness identified in this project, exemplified in both architectural representations and constructions, are mapped against Chinese architectural histories and the prevailing notions of Chineseness in contemporary architecture. This project challenges singular notions of Chineseness in architecture, and argues that architectural translation provided a site for shaping multiple definitions of Chineseness.

Cover of the Nanyang Industrial Exposition Commemoration Book Part 1.