

Constructing a Constellation of Architecture Criticism in 1980s China: Zeng Zhaofen and a Tale of Two Journals

Architecture Criticism, Zeng Zhaofen, Jiànzhúshī (The Architect), Shìjiè Jiànzhú (World Architecture), Constellation, China.

/Abstract

In 1980, Zeng Zhaofen, an academic at Tsinghua University, co-founded *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* (World Architecture), a journal devoted to introducing global architecture to China. While steering the journal's operations by editing articles and organizing academic activities during his editorship (1980–1995), Zeng seldom published architecture criticism in his own periodical, but rather did so in the journal's local rival, *Jiànzhúshī* (The Architect). His writings, with their strongly committed, political and operative tendencies, became one of the leading voices advocating for abstract modernism in 1980s China. This essay uses Zeng's critical activities of writing and editing as a vehicle to examine the conditions of possibility for journal culture and architecture criticism. It argues that Zeng's works associated with the two journals maintained a special character as a constellation through juxtaposing multiple texts, architects, projects, and ideas and presenting coherent positions within an underlying structuralized pattern—reconstructing the repressed discourse of modernism. The historical appearance of this intellectual constellation was dependent on a vibrant ecosystem of architecture criticism that reached its heyday in the 1980s, characterized by the dynamic and productive interactions between critics, editors, architects, and other stakeholders in a relaxed socio-political climate.

/Author

Guanghai Ding
Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture, China
tin_tin0504@hotmail.com

Guanghai Ding is Associate Professor of architecture at Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture in China. He is the author of *Constructing a Place of Critical Architecture in China: Intermediate Criticality in the Journal Time + Architecture* (Routledge, 2016) and co-author of *A History of Design Institutes in China: From Mao to Market* (Routledge, 2018, with Charlie Xue). His articles on the history, theory and criticism of contemporary Chinese architecture have been published by *Architecture and Culture*, *Architectural Research Quarterly*, *ARENA Journal of Architectural Research*, *Domus*, *Habitat International*, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, and in several edited volumes.

In 1995, the architecture critic Zeng Zhaofen made his final contribution as chief editor to the journal he had co-founded in 1980, *Shijie Jiànzhú* (World Architecture). He described with regret the sharp contrast between the prosperity of architectural creation and the silence of architectural theory and criticism that then prevailed in the field of architecture in China.¹ He noted that engaging in theoretical work inevitably led to poverty and neglect, and that scholarship could only be published at the author's own expense.² The reality is that few people were devoted to pursuing purely theoretical work. Owing to the omnipresence of economic pragmatism and uneven social development, the situation of architectural theory and criticism that Zeng described as withering at that time has not improved much today. Behind the prosperity of material production lies a crisis of discursive practices that is embodied in the barren landscape of architectural theory and criticism.

In quantitative terms, the silence of theory and criticism is in sharp contrast to the dynamics of material practice. Although professional journals are still the main platform and driving force for architecture criticism, the appearance of social media—or the digital revolution—has greatly changed the ways in which information is communicated and disseminated.³ The popularity of information-sharing websites full of a large number of descriptive design introductions (*shèjì shuōmíng*) has also modified how professional architects and students of architecture access building resources. Architecture criticism has become increasingly overwhelmed by introductory texts released by design firms to promote their reputation. In qualitative terms, media reports and articles in periodicals have become homogenized and convergent in their opinions.

In the Chinese cultural context, the recent decades have witnessed the proliferation of architecture criticism in scholarly and professional journals, contributed by qualified academics and architects who often work as part-time critics and write design appraisals for familiar architects.⁴ However, architecture criticism with a committed attitude, politicized position, and “operative” tendency is quite rare.⁵ Why does such criticism matter? How can it be produced in contemporary social and academic contexts? To answer these questions, in this essay I investigate the conditions for the possibility of effectively producing architecture criticism in 1980s China, the period that marked a golden age

1 Zeng Zhaofen, “Chénjì yú fánróng” [Silence and Prosperity], *Shijie Jiànzhú*, no. 2 (1995): 27–30, 60.

2 *Ibid.*, 27.

3 In contemporary China, there are no professional architecture critics who write regularly for a major newspaper. People engaged in architecture criticism are predominately architects or academics.

4 For a brief summary of the condition of architecture criticism in China, see Zhu Jianfei, “Zōuxiàng yīgè běntǔ de zhōngguó jiànzhú pīpíng: héjingtáng, shèjì yuàn, diyuán guānxì jí gètī—jǐtǐ hùnhé dònglì jīzhì” [Towards a Grounded Approach in Architectural Criticism in/on China: A Case Study on He Jingtang, the Design Institute, Geographic Relations and an Individual-Collective Hybridization], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, 1 (2018): 6–12.

5 Tafuri had critiqued “operative criticism”, an ideologically instrumental writing on architecture by well-established architectural historians such as Sigfried Giedion and Bruno Zevi. See Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture*, trans. Giorgio Verrecchia (London: Granada, 1980), 141. For a detailed analysis on Tafuri's position, see Mark Wigley, “Post-operative History,” *ANY* 25/26 (2000): 47–53; Susan Carty Piedmont, “Operative Criticism,” *Journal of Architectural Education*, 40:1 (1986): 8–13, DOI: 10.1080/10464883.1986.11102649

of architecture criticism.⁶ In doing so, I focus specifically on Zeng Zhaofen's editing/publishing/writing practices, using his work associated with the journal *Jiànzhúshī* as a vehicle and taking his own journal *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* as a comparative reference, to examine the dynamic interaction between journal publication and architecture criticism.

Zeng (1935-2020) belonged to a group of emerging architects, critics, and intellectuals who were educated before the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). After graduating from the South China Institute of Technology in 1960, he was assigned to Tsinghua University, but his teaching career was interrupted and repressed by the socio-political turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s. His critical activities were partly influenced by his colleague, Zhou Buyi, who had trained in the United States.⁷ In the 1950s, Zhou published a few articles promoting modernism and criticizing the domestic trend of eclecticism (for this reason, he was labeled a “rightist” and later persecuted); these were arguably some of the earliest pieces of architecture criticism to appear in Mao's China.⁸ Zeng's other colleague Chen Zhihua was a renowned architectural historian and a prolific critic whose writings focused primarily on the social dimensions of architectural production while critiquing power domination, social injustice, and uneven development.⁹ What made Zeng's criticism relevant to this essay is that he determinedly promoted young architects, advocated for modernist aesthetics, and criticized the eclecticism (*fùgǔ zhǔyì*) once practiced by established architects and supported by local officials. His often deeply grounded and passionate reviews made him one of the most influential architecture critics of his generation.

The study of writing and publishing practices has recently received growing scholarly attention in China, exemplified by the fact that several academic journals such as *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* (2014/08, edited by Zhang Li), *Jiànzhúshī* (2019/05, by Li Ge) and *Jiànzhú Xuebào* (Architectural Journal, 2020/11, by Huang Juzheng) had published special issues to examine the approaches, tools, principles, and practices of architecture criticism.¹⁰ These valuable works reflected the interest, anxiety, dissatisfaction and expectation of committed editors,

6 Compared with the condition of political repression in the 1960s and 1970s and of overwhelming commodification in the 1990s, intellectual debate arguably reached a peak in the 1980s, as the growing number of academic publications testified to this observation.

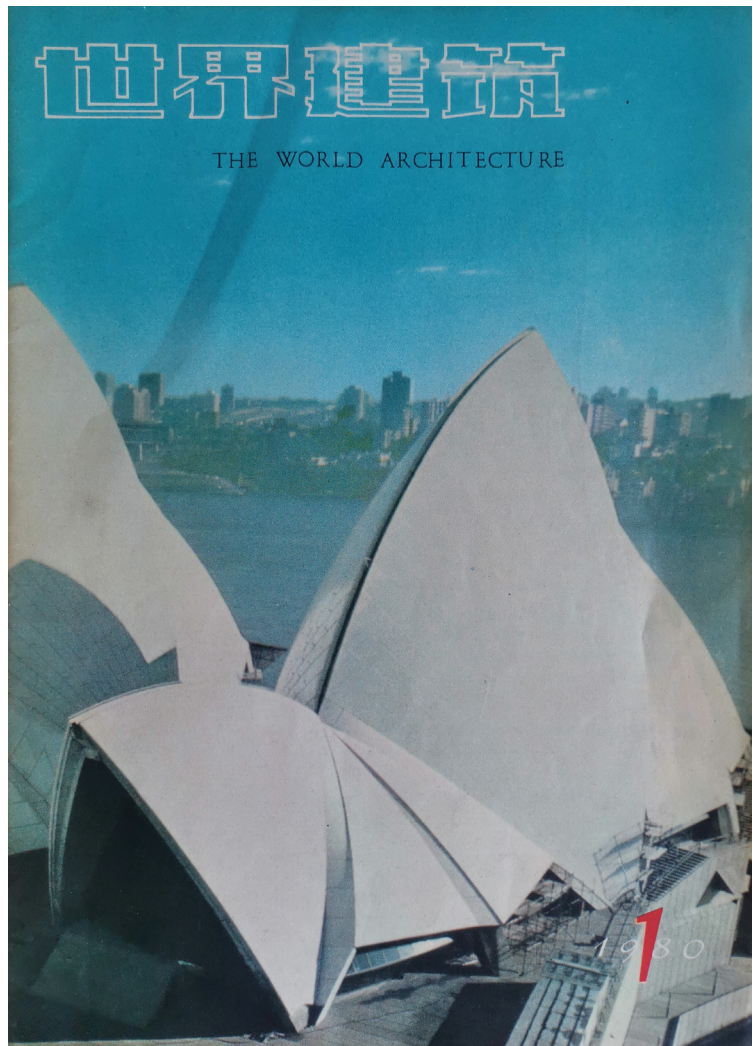
7 Zhou Buyi (1915-2003) studied architecture at the Central University in Nanjing before receiving master degrees from the University of Illinois in 1948 and Columbia University in 1949. He taught at Tsinghua University since 1950 and founded in 1982 the Architecture Department at Huazhong Institute of Technology in Wuhan.

8 The intellectual interactions between Zhou Buyi and Zeng Zhaofen are evident from Zhou having written the foreword to Zeng's 1989 anthology and Zeng having edited Zhou's anthology, which was published in 2003. See Zeng Zhaofen, *Chuàngzuò yǔ xíngshì: dāngdài zhōngguó jiànzhú pínglùn* [Design and Style: On Contemporary Chinese Architecture], with a foreword by Zhou Buyi (Tianjin: Tianjin Science and Technology Press, 1989); Zhou Buyi, *Zhōubùyì wénjí* [Anthology of Zhou Buyi], Zeng Zhaofen, ed. (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2003).

9 Chen Zhihua, *Bēichuāng zǎjì* [Miscellaneous Notes Taken by the North Window], (Zhengzhou: Henan Science and Technology Press, 2007).

10 Zhang Lufeng, “Jiànzhú pínglùn xiě gěi shéi kàn” [For Whom Is Architecture Criticism Written], *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*, no. 8 (2014): 76-77; Li Hua and Shen Yang, “Gàiniàn biànxī: jiànzhú pínglùn de sibiàn shìjiàn” [Conceptual Analysis: A Practice of Analytic Thinking for Architectural Criticism], *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 201 (2019): 4-5; Zhou Rong, “Zǒuxiàng ‘xīn pǐpíng’: dāngdài jiànzhú pínglùn de jiàzhí tǐrèn, zhìshí fèngōng yǔ rènwù dìngwèi” [Towards “New Criticism” Value Identification, Intellectual Specialization and Mission Orientation of Contemporary Architectural Criticism], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, 11 (2020): 1-5; Jin Qiuye, “Dǎpò fānlǐ bàochí jùlǐ-zài tán jiànzhú pínglùn hé jiànzhú shìjiàn de guānxi” [Breaking Boundaries While Keeping Distance: On the Relationship between Architectural Criticism and Architectural Practice], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, 11 (2020): 13-18.

critics and academics towards architectural writing. Similarly, the study of magazine culture has also expanded significantly, as demonstrated in a number of doctoral dissertations and published books.¹¹ Aside from these monographic researches, the study of periodicals is often bound up with the fifth or tenth anniversary celebration of specific journals, which commissioned relevant scholars and architects to summarize the periodical's academic and professional contribution through textual, image and editorial analysis.¹² Diverging from existing, separated study on architecture criticism and journal culture, this essay uses the works of Zeng Zhaofen, whose writing and editing practices were closely related to *Jiànzhúshī* and *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*, as a case study to examine the differential roles of periodicals in engaging with architecture criticism.¹³ Despite the neglect of his voice in the twentieth-first century (thanks to the emergence of a new generation of Chinese architects and critics), the re-assessment of his critical projects in the 1980s could help readers to understand the dynamic intellectual interactions in building, writing, and publishing practices in the Chinese/East Asian cultural context.¹⁴



1

Architecture Periodicals in 1980s China

The emergence of architecture periodicals in 1980s China can be considered a product of the decade-long social, economic, political, cultural, and ideological reform. The first issue of the journal *Shìjiè Jiànzhú* appeared in August 1980, just one year after the third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which marked the beginning of China's Reform and Opening-up program [Fig. 1]. Based in the Department of Architecture

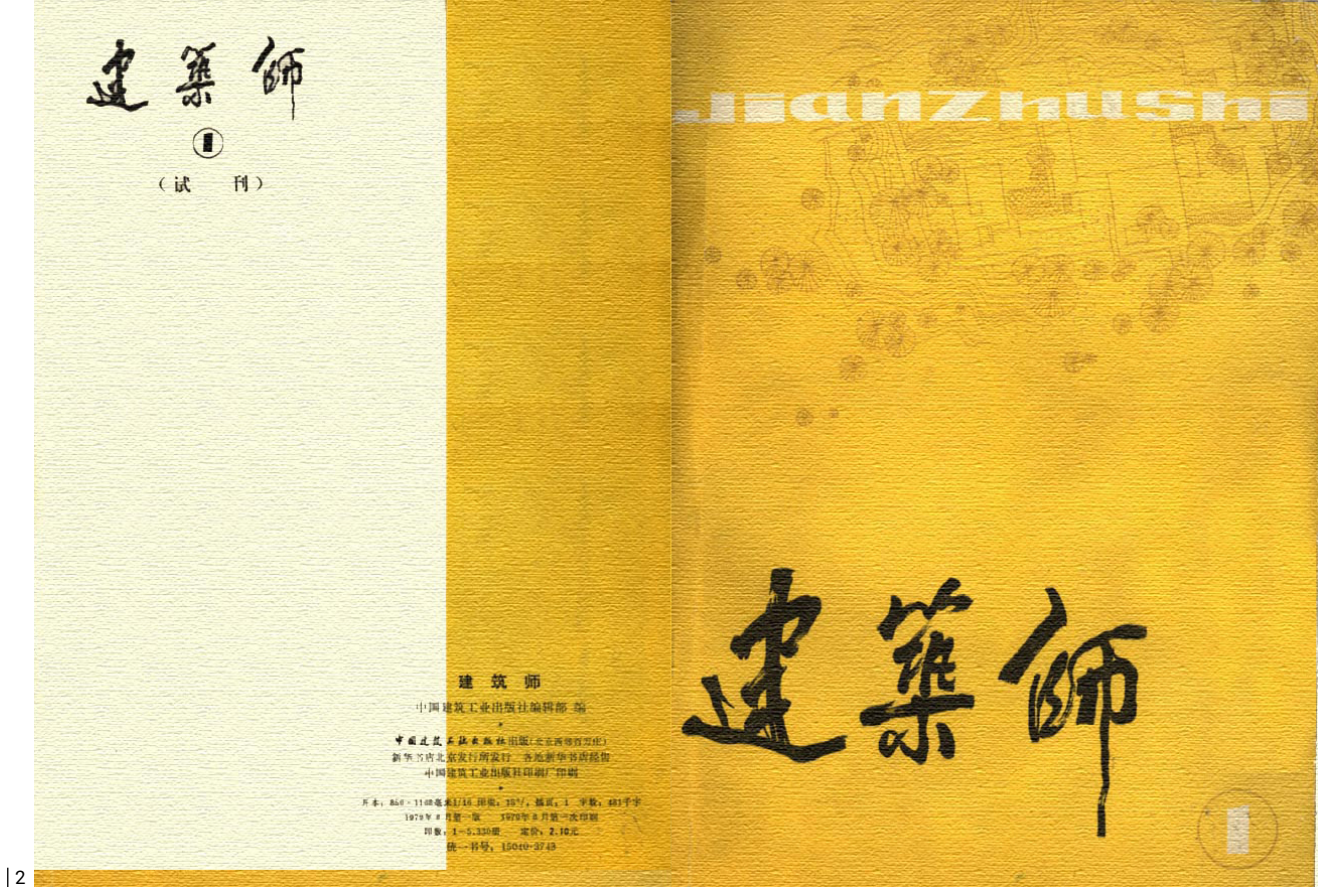
11 Liu Yuan, *Zhōngguó (dàlù dìqū) jiànzhú qīkān yánjiū* [A Study on the Architectural Periodicals in Mainland China], Ph.D. diss., South China University of Technology, 2007; Guanghui Ding, *Constructing a Place of Critical Architecture in China: Intermediate Criticality in the Journal Time + Architecture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

12 See the special issues published by *Jiànzhú Xuebào* (2014/11) and *Jiànzhúshī* (2019/04).

13 Li Lingyan, "Méijiè shìjiàn shìjiào xià jiànzhú zhuānyè qīkān duìyú zhōngguó dāngdài jiànzhú pīpíng de zuòyòng yánjiū, 1980-1989" [Research on the Role of Architectural Journals in Chinese Contemporary Architectural Criticism from the Perspective of Media Practice, 1980-1989], *Shìdài Jiànzhú*, no. 5 (2018): 140-144.

14 Although Zeng's editing and writing activities continued into the 1990s and even 2000s, in this essay I only focus on the 1980s, precisely because his works of this period reverberated through the dynamic landscape of intellectual and professional practices of contemporary Chinese architecture.

Fig. 1
The cover of *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*,
1980, no. 1



12

at Tsinghua University in Beijing, it was co-edited by Lv Zengbiao, Tao Dejian, and Zeng Zhaofen, and directed by their senior colleague Wang Tan.¹⁵ Before its appearance, the department had already published several volumes of collected essays penned and translated by Tsinghua academics. Just several months before the establishment of *Shijie Jiànzhú*, *Jiànzhúshī* journal was launched by Yang Yongsheng and Wang Boyang for the China Architecture and Building Press in 1979, a state-owned publishing house in Beijing [Fig. 2]. Since *Jiànzhúshī* mainly focused on domestic theoretical issues, *Shijie Jiànzhú* deliberately positioned itself to introduce the international practice of architecture to China.

Given the Chinese architects' limited access to international publications and overseas projects in the 1980s, *Shijie jiànzhú* played a crucial role in bridging national and global architectural cultures. The journal's contents were fundamentally classified into two parts. First were translations of articles and appropriation of images from Western architecture periodicals, such as *Architectural Record*, *Architectural Review*, *Architecture + Urbanism*, *Casabella*, *Domus*, *Progressive Architecture*, and *Shinken-chiku* (New Architecture); because of the dominant ideology and the absence of copyright protection in 1980s China, these published materials overlooked international intellectual property law (in other words, the selection of materials was not based on copyright negotiations, but on editors' and contributors' scholarly interests).¹⁶ The interests in and

15 These founding editors were once considered to have political problems during the Cultural Revolution, so they were not allowed to give lectures to students after the revolution. Before founding the journal, they were assigned to collect information, make drawings, and translate foreign literature. Ye Yang and Tian Ni, "Zéng-zhāofēn fāngtán" [Interview with Zeng Zhaofen], *Shijie Jiànzhú*, no. 1 (2016): 70–73.

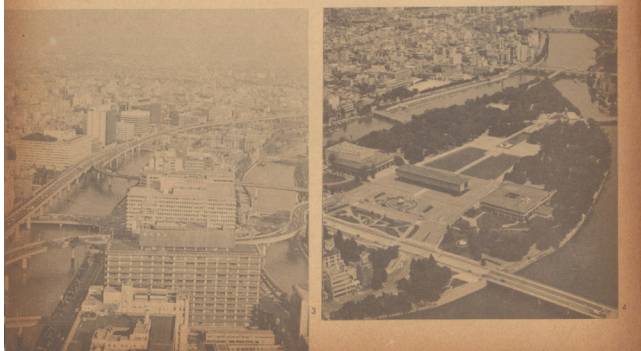
16 Facing the US's sanctions against China due to piracy of U.S. intellectual property and trade losses in the 1990s, China committed to join and became a signatory to the Berne Convention in 1992.

Fig. 2
The cover of *Jiànzhúshī*, 1979,
no. 1



日本的城市

- 1 国际贸易港口神户市
——由人工岛筑市区
- 2 长崎市中心街
- 3 日本第二大城市大阪
- 4 广岛和平公园



世界 建筑

1/1981

日本新建筑专号

- 6 战后日本建筑... 汪坦
- 9 日本新建筑——记东京阳光城和新草月会馆... 龚德顺
- 13 战后日本建筑业的发展... 王志周

·建筑设计作品·

- 15 东京文化会馆, 前川国男建筑设计事务所设计
- 18 国立屋内综合竞技场, 丹下健三都市建筑设计研究所设计
- 21 京都国际会馆, 大谷幸夫设计
- 24 东光园, 菊竹清训建筑设计事务所设计
- 27 新大谷饭店, 大成建设株式会社设计
- 30 代官山集合住宅, 横文彦综合计划事务所设计
- 33 吉城郡神冈町厅舍, 矶崎新建筑及环境设计工作室设计
- 36 东京阳光大厦, 三菱地所设计监理
- 40 群马县立历史博物馆, 大高建筑设计事务所设计
- 43 草月会馆, 丹下健三都市建筑设计研究所设计
- 46 杏树庄, 黑川纪章建筑都市设计事务所设计
- 48 青森县微波通讯塔, 日本综合建筑事务所及日本电报电话公社设计

- 49 东方巨大都会——东京... 朱自喧

- 57 日本的反调子文化... 黑川纪章(梁鸿文译)
- 62 日本的城市空间和“奥”... 横文彦(葛水雁译)

·建筑师介绍·

- 67 我的经验... 丹下健三(肖梦珏译)
- 77 世界城市化的进程... 谢文惠

·建筑技术·

- 79 国外平屋顶防水新法和倒铺式屋面... 刘兆丰

- 4 世界建筑简讯(七则)
- 2 日本的城市(图页)
- 83 日本古建筑(图页)

封面 东京草月会馆

编辑 《世界建筑》编辑部
(北京清华大学主楼九楼)
出版 清华大学出版社
制版 人民日报印刷厂
彩色制版 外文印刷厂
印刷 外文印刷厂
定价 0.65元
出版日期 1981年2月1日
□北京市期刊登记证第684号□

13

presentations of modern Japanese architecture, for example, both reflected the burgeoning Sino-Japan relations in the early 1980s and the intention to learn from Japan's experience in mediating tradition and modernity [Fig. 3]. Then there were investigation reports provided by architects who were able to travel globally and study notes penned by scholars who were studying at or visiting Western universities. In the late 1970s, a number of Chinese architects were able to travel to the West for study tours or to work on architectural aid projects in Africa and Asia. At the same time, a first group of Chinese architecture students and academics was sponsored by the government to study in the United States, Japan, and Europe and to visit the latest projects built abroad. Their articles became an important channel to help national audiences understand what was going on in the world.

With its global scope, the journal's publications mainly concentrated on the architecture of advanced economies, such as the American, Japanese, European, Australian, Canadian, Singaporean, and the Soviet ones, but occasionally introduced buildings from Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Africa. The published projects were normally categorized into specific types, including hotels, housing, offices, hospitals, factories, galleries, laboratories, shopping malls, plazas, and many others. These publications compensated to a considerable degree for the lack of knowledge of international architecture that resulted from China's isolation from the Western architectural field. Perhaps more subtly, *Shijie Jiànzhú's* publications had a significant influence on the younger generation of Chinese architects who were not able to travel abroad in the 1980s, as their design works showcased certain formal and spatial connections with global projects of the time.

Fig. 3
Shijie Jiànzhú's special issue on new Japanese architecture, 1981, no. 1.

Historically, *Jiànzhú Xuébào*, launched in 1954 and published by the Architectural Society of China, was the only professional journal with any political significance in the Mao era; it was a widely-circulated monthly periodical broadcasting the state's voice and guidelines on architectural practice. At times *Jiànzhú Xuébào* changed radically position from one issue to the other, the probable sign of its difficulty to stay behind a continuously evolving official line. From the point of view of the contents, *Jiànzhú Xuébào* was devoted to presenting both scholarly articles and the latest projects, focusing primarily on domestic architecture while also covering the issues of urban planning, gardens, and landscape. Owing to its limited space and official position, longer polemical articles were rarely accepted by *Jiànzhú Xuébào*. The journal occasionally introduced projects built in capitalist as well as socialist countries, depending on the changes in the national political circumstances. More importantly, it organized a series of symposia (*zuòtánhuì*) in which leading architects and academics were invited to comment on a specific project after making an on-site visit to it. While a large volume of these criticisms tended to appraise the architect's skills and efforts, writings that took a critical position were rare in the pages of the journal. The absence of critical voice may leave some space for its competitors to fill the gap.

The 1980s witnessed the extensive appearance of scholarly-professional journals in China, for instance, *Nánfāng Jiànzhú* (South Architecture, 1981), *Xīn Jiànzhú* (New Architecture, 1983), and *Shídài Jiànzhú* (Time + Architecture, 1984) [Fig. 4]. Among these newly-established periodicals, *Jiànzhúshī* was arguably much more influential among the academic community in the late twentieth century. A number of reasons may explain why it had such a reputation. First, although its publication did not represent the official voice of the state apparatus, the journal was endorsed by top-level officials such as Yan Zixiang, the Deputy Head of the National Bureau of Architectural Engineering. Yan had recognized the journal and asked the editors of the local rival *Jiànzhú Xuébào* to learn from it with an open mind.¹⁷ Second, in terms of its sponsors compared to those of other journals, *Jiànzhúshī* maintained a prestigious status in the Chinese architectural publishing scene and enjoyed a vast pool of contributors.



Fig. 4
The cover of *Shídài Jiànzhú*,
1984, no. 1

¹⁷ Yang Yongsheng, *Miǎnshù* [Memoirs], eds. Li Ge and Wang Lihui (Beijing: China Architecture and Building Press, 2012), 166–167.

While other journals were fundamentally local periodicals, *Jiànzhúshī* could be considered a national one. The origins of the journal's editorial committee members were a testimony of this remarkable national influence.¹⁸ These committee members were in their forties and had graduated from architecture schools before the Cultural Revolution, but were not well established at that time. Nonetheless, they were committed to doing something different in the new historical period, with ambition, willingness, energy, and enthusiasm, which the journal's editors would fully recognize and acknowledge.

In the strict sense, *Jiànzhúshī* was not an academic journal *per se*. First of all, it did not have a periodical serial number (*kānhào*) issued by the state's press and publishing agencies. As an alternative to periodical publication, the press published each issue as a single book. This strategy was a form of soft resistance and a creative response to the official media censorship agency; as Yang later acknowledged, even if they had applied for such a number, the authorities might not have approved it.¹⁹ Second, publication as a book rather than as a conventional journal brought with it a certain degree of freedom and flexibility in content and period. It included a variety of articles of different lengths. From August 1979 to December 1989, 36 issues were published (it was almost a quarterly publication), and each issue usually had more than 200 pages.

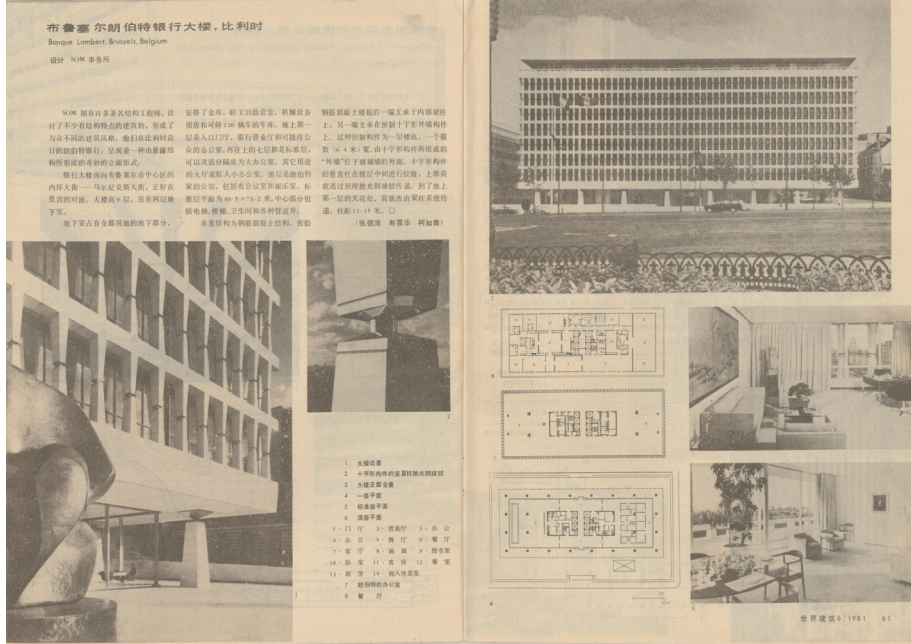
Comparison between *Shijie Jiànzhú* and *Jiànzhúshī*

The first significant differences between the two journals lay in their institutional backgrounds, organizational structures, and academic networks. *Shijie Jiànzhú* was closely associated with the Tsinghua Architecture Department but jointly sponsored by the Beijing Institute of Architectural Design. Thanks to the rich collection of Western architecture periodicals to which the department's library subscribed, the founding editors like Lv, Tao, and Zeng were able to access the latest information in the design and construction field. These academics, together with their colleagues from the department and a large number of alumni, played a significant role in providing essential source materials. The journal's position as a means of introducing international architecture to China not only reflected chief editor Lv's own interests but also was recognized and supported by the Head of Department, Wu Liangyong, and the President of the journal, Wang Tan.²⁰ Despite the change of chief editor over the past four decades, the direction of the journal has remained consistent to the present day.

18 Aside from the press's editor Wang Boyang, other editorial committee members included a professional architect from East China Institute of Architectural Design Fan Shouzhong, and eight academics from China's eight prestigious architecture schools, such as Deng Linhan (Harbin Institute of Architectural Engineering), Liu Baozhong (Xi'an Institute of Metallurgy and Architecture), Liu Guanping (South China Institute of Technology), Bai Zuomin (Chongqing Institute of Architectural Engineering), Lv Zengbiao (Tsinghua University), Yan Longyu (Nanjing Institute of Technology), Peng Yigang (Tianjin University) and Yu Weiguo (Tongji University).

19 Yang, *Miǎnshù*, 165.

20 Both Wu Liangyong (1922-) and Wang Tan (1916-2001) were senior professors who had studied architecture both at the National Central University in Nanjing and in the United States. Wu studied at the Cranbrook Academy of Art with Eero Saarinen from 1948 to 1950. Wang studied with Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin from 1948 to 1949. Both emphasized the importance of learning from Western experience.



5 |

Compared with *Shijie Jiànzhú's* rich internal resources, *Jiànzhúshī* relied more on external contributors. It was Yang Yongsheng, *Jiànzhúshī's* *de facto* chief editor who played a pivotal role in steering the journal's direction and organizing and coordinating various scholarly networks. Despite the absence of his name on the journal's editorial committee, Yang was the decision-maker behind the scenes. The name's omission was a strategy to avoid making enemies in the Chinese political and social context and to foster intellectual debate and advance architecture criticism. Yang continued to be ambitious, courageous, visionary, and charismatic.²¹ This unique character enabled him to attract, acknowledge, and unite a large number of contributors, ranging from leading and well-respected academics, to seasoned scholars and critics and to emerging practitioners and junior graduate students.

Whereas *Shijie Jiànzhú* tended to present concise introductory descriptive texts with rich professional black and white illustrations, *Jiànzhúshī* was inclined to publish analytic, interpretive, lengthy texts with monochrome and hand-drawn sketches of buildings. The former partly reprinted polished photographs originally published in international periodicals and partly presented images taken by Chinese architects and academics [Fig. 5]; the latter's graphic design was characterized by an extraordinary density of texts and sketches, probably because the authors and contributors were unable to access high-quality images [Fig. 6]. Whereas *Shijie Jiànzhú* concentrated on specific projects and buildings while lacking deeper analysis of background and context, *Jiànzhúshī* attempted to create an alternative mode of journal publishing focused more on academic research and intellectual debate and less on recording the details of new buildings.²² Whereas *Shijie Jiànzhú* was image-oriented, reflecting the latest trends in global architecture, *Jiànzhúshī* was text-saturated, presenting domestic intellectual dynamics.

21 Yang Yongsheng (1931–2012) initially worked as a Russian interpreter for Soviet technicians in Northeast China in the 1950s and later as an editor in the Architecture and Building Press in Beijing. In 1971, he reestablished the press, taking the role of managing chief editor and recruiting a number of senior editors, including Wang Boyang, who later became his associate in editing the journal in the 1980s.

22 Yang, *Miǎnshù*, 163.

Fig. 5
Content of *Shijie Jiànzhú*, 1981,
no. 6

(二)结构形式的特征与建筑形象的个性

通俗地讲,建筑形象的个性(individuality)就是指同一类型建筑反映在视觉空间上的差异特征,即可识别性。

建筑形象的个性是由建筑创作所依据的不同客观条件(自然条件、物质条件、技术条件、经济条件等)和主观条件(专业技能、创作思想、文化修养等)所带来的。正因为如此,所以现代结构技术的发展并非必然导致建筑形象的创造千篇一律和“冷若冰霜”。奈尔维生前就赞赏“别、别、别!混凝土以及能使其合理利用的结构理论,是建筑师可以任意指挥的新乐器,他可以利用这些新乐器创作出远比过去曾有过的一切建筑更为丰富多彩的建筑交响乐”。

在现代建筑的空间造型中,我们应当努力去发掘结构形式的特征与建筑形象个性之间的内在联系。无疑,这是我们克服建筑创作中模式化(即公式化、舞剧的)一条重要途径。

1. 从单体建筑的背景着眼,利用结构形式的特征来表现建筑形象的个性

象创作一幅画一样,你所着力刻划的主体总是脱离不开画面的背景的,利用结构形式的特征来表现建筑形象的个性,也必须与它的“背景”取得有机的联系。所谓建筑背景,就是与你所设计的建筑物相映衬的周围景物,即环境。但建筑背景的层次是可以随着人们平视、仰视和俯视的不同情况而变化的。从主次关系上看,构成建筑背景的大体上有以下两种画面:

(1)主要是以自然景观物为建筑背景的画面。

(2)主要是以建筑群体为建筑背景的画面。

人们的建筑审美经验表明,巧妙地掌握和利用结构形式的特征,努力使别开生面的建筑造型的艺术美与婀娜多姿的自然美相“匹配”,这是环境建筑设计获得成功的一个诀窍所在。悉尼歌剧院这个特殊的例子说明了这一点,而图61、62、63、64、65几个普通的实例不也同样令人信服么?从美学的角度来讲,环境建筑设计对结构构思提出的一个要求就是,巧妙地利用建筑的原则,使结构形式的基本特征同建筑背景中的自然景观物相得益彰。试想,如果我们把图65中的漏形建筑结构用在图61所示的观察台上,那将会产生什么样的视觉空间效果?同样,图65那个展现在弯曲的海滨公路之旁的餐厅,如果采用双曲抛物面壳,恐怕也难以与该环境及其他地段取得协调。即使是以大自然为背景,新结构形式的特征也并不可以随意加以利用和发挥的。

自然风景区的新型建筑不应仅给人以轻松、愉快的视觉感受,而且在可能条件下,还应当努力使结构形式的特征富于

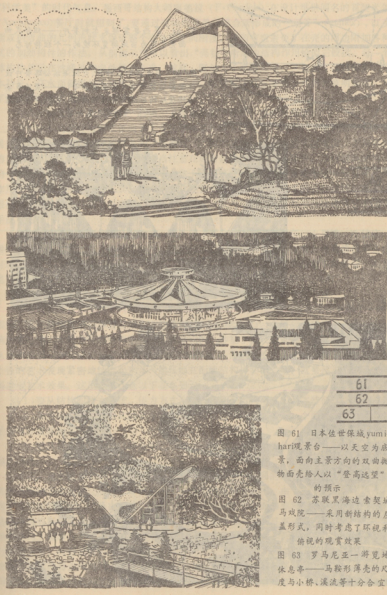


图 61 日本建筑师坂井俊一设计的观景台——以天空为背景,面向主要方向的双曲抛物面壳给人以“登高望远”的预示

图 62 苏联黑海沿岸度假地与度假——不同结构形式的建筑形式,同时考虑了环境和建筑的视觉效果

图 63 罗马尼亚一游览地休息亭——双曲面壳的大度与小巧、溪流等十分合宜

The two journals were neither independent publications nor “little magazines” in the Western sense.²³ They did not present editorials in each issue reflecting the individual editors’ ideologies or positions. Their sponsors belonged to state-owned institutions. Owing to the existence of only a few journals in 1980s China, both enjoyed large circulation numbers—more than 20,000 copies each issue. Both journals organized a number of international and national design competitions. These events contributed to their good reception among professional architects, academics, and college students. Given their low price, lack of advertisements, limited financial support, and increasing costs, both journals struggled to maintain their operations in the first decade of their existence.

In terms of architecture criticism, *Shijie Jiànzhú* suffered from the absence of critical tension.²⁴ For instance, Chen Zhihua’s 1995 comment on the journal’s fifteenth anniversary revealed this intellectual deficiency. Chen, a longtime contributor to the journal, suggested that it should introduce more everyday buildings and fewer masterpiece works by well-known architects, present more analytic, creative, engaged writings and fewer random, discursive introductory texts, and provide more interpretations of buildings’ social value and historical meaning, and less rhetorical theory.²⁵ Although he recognized the journal’s contribution, Chen’s comments subtly indicated discontent with its status quo and expressed a preference for rooted, grounded scholarship, as opposed to fragmentary, un-systematic architecture reviews.

When Zeng Zhaofen worked for *Shijie Jiànzhú* as an editor, he was engaged with translating texts, organizing events, and publishing articles; he later steered the editorial committee, ensuring that the journal operated in the direction of

23 See Beatriz Colomina and Craig Buckley, eds., *Clip, Stamp, Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines, 196X - 197X* (Barcelona: Actar, 2010).

24 In the first issue of 1988, *Shijie Jiànzhú* published a special issue on American architecture through translating parts of the essays of *Critical Edge: Controversy in Recent American Architecture* edited by Tod A. Marder. This issue explicitly reflected Zeng’s and Wang’s intention to promote domestic architecture criticism through introducing American colleagues’ methods and experience.

25 Mei Chen (Chen Zhihua), “Shijie jiànzhú chuàngkān shíwǔ zhōunián bǐtán” [Notes on the Fifteenth Anniversary of *Shijie Jiànzhú*], *Shijie Jiànzhú*, no. 3 (1995): 15.

Fig. 6
Bu Zhengwei’s article published in *Jiànzhúshī*, 1983, no. 17

introducing international architecture. As a critic, he rarely published his critical texts in the journal but submitted them instead to *Jiànzhúshī*. This interesting phenomenon implied that *Shijie Jiànzhú* maintained a collective (non-individual) editorial position—Zeng respected his colleagues' initial ideas, while *Jiànzhúshī*, under the editorship of Yang and Wang, encouraged the expression of critical debate. Perhaps, in this regard, nothing was more striking than the intensive presentation of Zeng's criticism in the pages of *Jiànzhúshī* in the 1980s. These writings to some extent became a bridge linking the two periodicals. Some of the architects that were discussed in his criticism had also written articles for *Shijie Jiànzhú*, introducing Western (including Japanese) architectural culture. These publications, together with other materials published in *Shijie Jiànzhú*, had a subtle but significant influence on emerging architects during the early reform period, as we can see later.

Intellectual Debate: Redefining the Field

In the first issue of *Jiànzhúshī*, architect Lin Leyi promoted intellectual debate through *zhēng míng*. In the Chinese cultural context, *zhēng* means debating and arguing against somebody's ideas, while *míng* refers to the expression of one's own thoughts and does not necessarily involve opposing or criticizing others; in this sense, it would hardly be likely to make enemies. The architectural scenario of *zhēng míng* was best manifested in the 1959 *zuòtánhuì*, a week-long conference on architectural arts held in Shanghai.²⁶ The outbreak of the Cultural Revolution and the subsequent shutdown of architecture schools and suspension of academic publications gave rise to a substantial decrease in *zhēng míng* in the public domain. Lin maintained that, even without big debates, scholarly discussion could still contribute to mutual understanding, learning, inspiration, and encouragement.²⁷

One of the examples illustrating *zhēng míng* that appeared in the journal is the debate between tangible, formal similarity (*xíng sì*) and intangible, spiritual similarity (*shén sì*).²⁸ The former refers to the appropriation of traditional forms such as the predominant large pitched roofs on modern structures, as manifested in Zhang Bo's Beijing Friendship Hotel (1954). The latter refers to the transformation of traditional elements to represent tradition, exemplified in the Chairman Mao Memorial Hall (1977). A contribution to *Jiànzhúshī* by an architect from the Shaanxi Province Metallurgy Design Institute, also named Zhang Bo, identified the aesthetic principle of ambiguity (*sìshì érfēi, sīfēi érshì*) as being useful in

26 In the conference, many leading architects and academics articulated their opinions on the subject matter. For example, Liu Xiufeng, the then Minister of Architectural Engineering, proposed the highly challenging task of creating a new style of Chinese socialist architecture. The ambiguities of this slogans produced overwhelming anxieties and debates, which had previously been restrained and re-appeared in the early 1980s. See Liu Xiufeng, "Chuàngzào zhōngguó de shèhuì zhǔyì de jiànzhú xīn fēnggé" [Creating a New Style of the Chinese Socialist Architecture], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, Z1 (1959): 3–12.

27 Lin Leyi, "Tántán wǒmen jiànzhúshī zhè yèháng" [Discussion on the Profession of Architects], *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 1 (1979): 7–9.

28 Zhang Bo, etc. "Guanyú jiànzhú xiàndàihuà hé jiànzhú fēnggé wèntí de yīxiē jiànyì" [Some Opinions on Architectural Modernization and Style], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, no. 1 (1979): 26–30.

generating forms. He argued that the Memorial Hall, a project with double layers of roofs decorated by golden Chinese glazed roof tiles, which was reminiscent of the roofs of traditional imperial buildings such as Tiananmen.²⁹ To verify the importance of *shén sì*, Zhang also remarked that the courtyard design of hotels in Guangzhou and Guilin was reminiscent of traditional scholarly gardens, as they had similar spatial compositions.

Zhang's idea of *shén sì* was immediately criticized by his peer Zeng Zhaofen. In a 1982 article, Zeng asserted that the promotion of both *xíng sì* and *shén sì* considerably restrained formal innovation.³⁰ His article was initially submitted to *Jiànzhù Xuebào* but was unfortunately rejected without any reason. It was Xu Zhen, who became an editorial committee member of *Jiànzhúshī* in 1981 and knew Zeng personally, who recommended his article to Yang Yongsheng. After reading it, Yang asked Xu to take a message to Zeng, saying that if he dared to write anything, he would dare to publish it.³¹ In fact, Zeng had coauthored papers with his colleague He Chongyi on traditional gardens such as the Old Summer Palace for the journal before writing criticism. This article marked the beginning of his two-decade-long career as an architecture critic. To present this piece of criticism, the journal's editors added an editorial passage before the main article, arguing that:

Over the years, articles on architecture criticism have been very rare. When a building is completed, it is easy to see the introduction article, but the comments on its merits and demerits are rarely published. Is there no comment? Of course not. Despite maintaining diverse opinions, architects hesitate to write an article for the public. The reason is that they probably fear to offend their peers. However, architectural creation, like literary and artistic creation, is inevitably of good or bad quality. Thus, criticism is a necessary means to improve the level of creation. Therefore, we advocate architecture criticism, suggesting that architects should comment on their own or others' work, and encouraging architects to treat others' criticism correctly.³²

In as much as *Jiànzhúshī* did not have a section for an editorial statement, this passage revealed the editors' position and their intention to engage with architecture criticism. This engagement created valuable and meaningful opinion spaces for the expression of sharp-edged dissensus or disagreement rather than consensus and therefore differentiated itself from other academic journals. Zeng's article claimed that the promotion of both *xíng sì* and *shén sì* was inclined to appropriate traditional forms, elements, and motifs and would ultimately lead to the appearance of eclecticism. In contrast, he praised the practice of South China Medical School teaching buildings (by Germany-trained

29 Zhang Bo, "Shénsì chúyì: shìtàn jiànzhù zàoxíng yìshù de jìchéng yǔ chuàngxīn" [Discussion on shénsì: Exploring the Inheritance and Innovation of Architectural Art], *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 12 (1982): 13–18.

30 Zeng Zhaofen, "Jiànzhù xíngshì de xījiù yǔ chuàngxīn" [The Appropriation of Old Architectural Forms and Innovation], *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 13 (1982): 28–40.

31 Ye and Tian, "Zéngzhāofēn fāngtán," 72.

32 Zeng, "Jiànzhù xíngshì de xījiù yǔ chuàngxīn," 28. [Author's translation]



7

architect Xia Changshi, 1956), Beijing Children's Hospital (by French-trained Hua Lanhong, 1954), and Beijing Telegraph Building (by US-trained Lin Leyi, 1958), as all of them were extraordinary examples of modernist expression in the context of Socialist realism dominating Chinese architecture production in the 1950s [Fig. 7].³³ For Zeng, these architects did not focus on the formal and spiritual similarities between the new and traditional buildings; rather, they created new images and fresh languages based on the subtle integration of abstract modernism and the local climate or traditional culture.

A Constellation of Architecture Criticism

As the press's senior editor Peng Hualiang summarized, Zeng's criticism maintained clarity and enthusiasm, in addition to a compelling argument and

33 Zeng, Zhaofen. "Jiànzhú pínglùn de sīkǎo yǔ qídài: jiān tán jiànzhú chuàngzuò zhōng de 'jīngpài', 'guǎng pài', 'hāipài'" [The Thoughts and Expectation of Architecture Criticism: Also on the "Beijing School", "Guangzhou School" and "Shanghai School" in Architectural Creation]. *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 17 (1983): 5–18.

Fig. 7
Hua Lanhong, Beijing Children's Hospital, 1954, Photo by Hou Kaiyuan, Courtesy of BIAD



吕俊华，女
1932年7月生
1953年南京工学院建筑系毕业
1956年清华大学建筑系研究生毕业
导师：吴良镛教授、华揽庭总建筑师
现为清华大学建筑系副教授
(照片右边是由她所指导的学生设计的某住宅模型)

“千篇一律”的方盒子！对大量性建造的公共住宅楼的指责，几乎是众口一词，成了定论了。

笔者曾经认为，目前各地仍在大量建造的许多公共住宅楼的标准设计，是住宅设计者和建设者长期实践，精益求精的可贵成果。它们的运用，经济和美是有目共睹的。以我们现有的经济能力、生活水平、造价及面积定额、材料及施工技术条件来衡量它们，那么，它们不愧是一些高水平的住宅设计。它们是在我国具体情况下，在极其苛刻的限制条件下的历史产物，千篇一律似乎是它们的必然命运。

要向这一必然命运挑战，单凭主观愿望或采取某些装饰手段是不行的，用增加面积定额和大幅度增加造价的办法，也不能与当前的经济水平相适应——所以，在笔者的意识中，要克服千篇一律的状况，在当前几乎是不可能的。

正因为这样，当吕俊华设计的新住宅方案公诸于世并为实践所接受时，我们上述认识受到一次很大的震动——好像是，本该在几十年后才能实现的愿望，骤然在一个早上变成了现实！

在她的方案中，每户的建筑面积仍然只有五十平方米，仍然采用当前大家所熟悉的材料和施工方法，居然做出了一系列花园住宅方案，为每一户居民准备了一个十平方米的花园平台。平面、造型、色彩都有新意（图1~5），正如作者所说，这种台阶式花园住宅系列设计的出发点，是要打破目前一般多层住宅——抹平、一刀切、行列式、居住区面貌千篇一律的单调局面。它做到了。

标准化与多样化统一，用一种开间参数(3.3米)设计一套单元系列。单元组合灵活，建筑体型丰富。

基本间定型而户型多样；
高密度下的良好居住环境，多层住宅，多层绿化，绿化覆盖率大，而且接近居民，每家有一个10平方米以上的屋顶花园或地面花园。



图1 台阶式花园住宅实验小区模型轴测



图2 台阶式花园住宅实验小区模型透视图



图3 台阶式花园住宅模型——正南

straightforward tone.³⁴ For example, “The Gain and Inspiration of Architectural Creation”, published in *Jiànzhúshī* in 1986 was initially submitted to *Jiànzhú Xuebào* for the 1985 conference in Guangzhou held by the Architectural Society of China, but was rejected with comments recommending that it should focus on senior architects rather than emerging figures and, moreover, that it should highlight their successes and achievements.³⁵

Indeed, this was the very context that Zeng’s article tried to express. It did not praise well-established architects but introduced eight emerging figures who were largely in their forties and had usually gone unrepresented in the architectural community. They had diverse backgrounds, ages, genders, locations, and approaches to design. The selection of these practitioners showcased Zeng’s ambition to search for alternatives and legitimize such explorations, as their works explored modernist aesthetics rather than traditional languages.³⁶ The inclusiveness of this selection made his text intellectually dense and diverse, and differentiated it from conventional architecture criticism published in the periodicals of the day and today, which usually centered exclusively on one particular building. These projects, for him, were not the first to be published and nor did they represent the highest quality. However, their collective appearance formed an exciting scenario that challenged formal mediocrity and indicated a new possibility of aesthetic innovation.

For example, the first architect that Zeng introduced is his Tsinghua colleague, Lv Junhua, whose five-story stepped housing project broke through the domination of multi-story urban housing with parallel layout [Fig. 8]. It is interesting to note that Lv had been a contributor to *Shijie Jiànzhú* before the appearance of her work in *Jiànzhúshī*. In her first article published in *Shijie Jiànzhú* (1981),

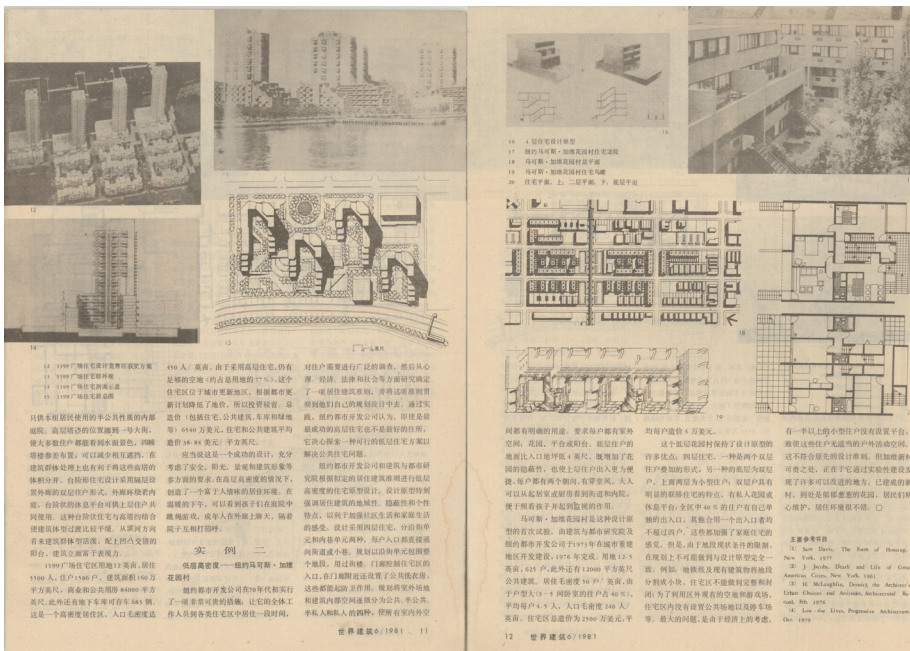
34 Peng Hualiang, “Huānyíng gèngduō de zhānkèsī shì de jiànzhú pínglùn jiā: dú zéngzhāofēn wénzhāng ǒugǎn” [Welcoming More Charles Jencks-style Architecture Critics: Reading Zeng Zhaofen’s Articles], *Jiànzhúshī*, 34 (1989): 132–135.

35 Ye and Tian, “Zéngzhāofēn fāngtán”, 72.

36 Zeng Zhaofen, “Jiànzhú chuàngzuò de shōuhuò yǔ qǐshì: xiàng zhōngnián jiànzhú shǐmèn xuéxí bǐjì” [The Gain and Inspiration of Architectural Creation: Learning Notes from Middle-aged Architects], *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 26 (1986): 1–46.

Fig. 8

The presentation of Lv Junhua’s work in Zeng Zhaofen’s criticism, published in *Jiànzhúshī*, 1986, no. 26



9 |

10 |

11 |

Fig. 9
Lv Junhua's article published in *Shijie Jiànzhù*, 1981, no. 6

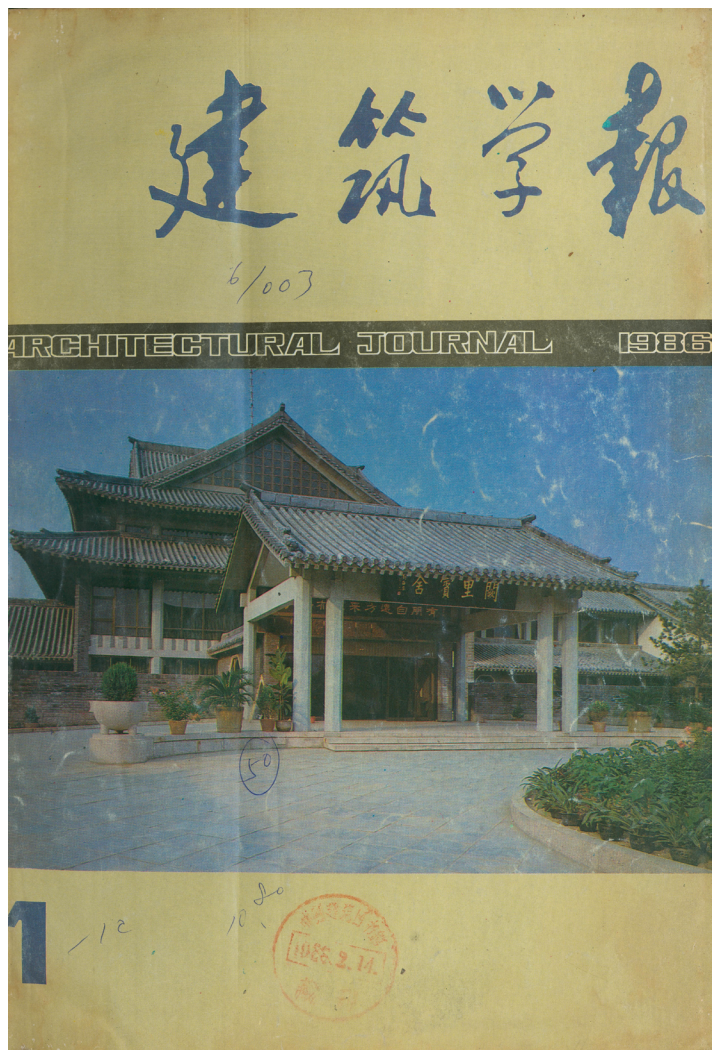
Fig. 10
Housing project published in *Progressive Architecture*, 1976, no. 3

Fig. 111
Housing project published in *Progressive Architecture*, 1979, no. 10

Lv reviewed the historical evolution of housing design in the United States and introduced a few high-rise, high density (1199 Plaza) and low-rise, high density projects (Marcus Garvey Park Village) built in New York City [Fig. 9].³⁷ Perhaps more interestingly, the large part of her texts and images about the two projects were directly appropriated from the contents of *Progressive Architecture* (1976/3, 1979/10) and *Architectural Record* (1976/2) [Figs. 10-11]. Arguably, this article is the first piece of detailed introduction of American housing design to the Chinese audiences, although Lv had never been to the US at the time of its publication.³⁸ While its immediate impact on domestic professionals in the 1980s remains unclear, it did have a crucial influence on her own work. To some extent, her 1984 housing design creatively borrowed and combined the stepped forms of 1199 Plaza and the compact layout of Marcus Garvey Park Village.

Zeng's criticism on Lv's work demonstrates three levels of meanings: Zeng's advocacy of creative explorations and modernist architecture by emerging architects; *Jiànzhúshī's* engagement with architecture criticism; and *Shijie Jiànzhú's* subtle influence on the exchange of architectural culture and its inspiration on domestic design practice. To this, we may add another text by Zeng that was published in *Jiànzhúshī* in 1989. This article classified architectural practice in 1980s China into three approaches.³⁹

Firstly, Zeng expressed his discontent with the formally conservative instances embodied in Dai Nianci's Queli Hotel [Fig. 12]. In this project, Dai employed traditional formal languages in response to the surrounding historical context (Confucian Temple), while at the expense of extensive manpower in design and construction.⁴⁰ Zeng believed that it diverged from



12

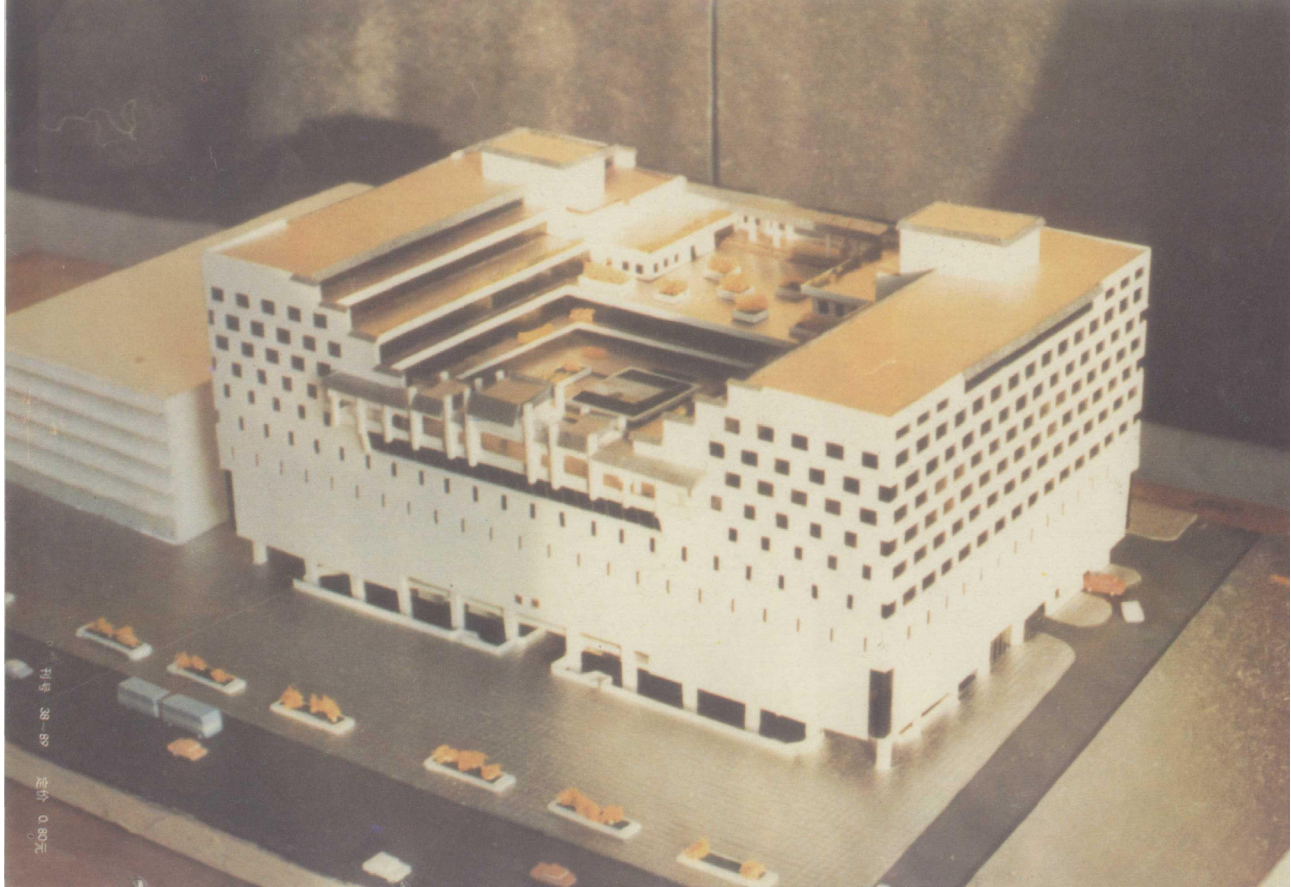
37 Lv Junhua, "Méiguó zhùzhái jiànshè zhōng de jūzhù mìdù hé céngshù wèntí" [The Dwelling Density and Number of Story in American Housing Construction], *Shijie Jiànzhú*, no. 6 (1981): 6-12.

38 Lv's interests in housing design started from the mid-1950s when she studied for her master degree at Tsinghua University. Her community design project was appreciated by Hua Lanhong, who was a visiting critic in the architecture department at that time. Later, Lv was invited by Hua to assist him to design Beijing Xingfu Village Community, a social housing project for low-income residents that reinterpreted traditional courtyard layout.

39 Zeng Zhaofen, "Yángguāndào yǔ dùmùqiáo: jiànzhú chuàngzuò de sānzhǒng tújǐng" [Broad Road and Single-log Bridge: Three Approaches of Architectural Creation], *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 36 (1989): 1-25.

40 Dai Nianci (1920-1991), whose works largely oscillated between Beaux-Arts eclecticism (National Art Museum of China, Beijing, 1963) and pure modernism (The Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1973), had a deliberate consciousness to mediate tradition and modernity. Dai Nianci, "Lùn jiànzhú de fēnggé, xíngshì, nèiróng jí qīta: zài fánróng jiànzhú chuàngzuò xuéshù zuótán huì shàng de jiǎnghuà" [On Architectural Style, Form and Content], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, no. 2 (1986): 3-16.

Fig. 12
Dai Nianci's Queli Hotel,
published on the cover of
Jiànzhú Xuebào, 1986, no. 2



modernization which required modern, fresh formal expression and industrialized construction. Worse, for him, is that such an approach was uncritically admired by the establishment and supported by official ideologies.⁴¹

Conversely, Zeng eulogized the innovative endeavor showcased in a range of formally experimental projects. He appreciated Fu Kecheng's appropriation of traditional motifs as decorations on modern structures. Fu's proposal of Beijing Xidan Commercial Complex rendered a monolithic volume with iconic façade—the size and distribution of windows with gradual change, alluding to the difference of functions. What is more striking is that the architects put a traditional *pailou* (a local gateway structure) in the middle of the building, creating a dramatic visual focus [Fig. 13].

The design method and tactics of emerging architects were largely consistent with the discourses and practices of postmodern architecture, which were once debated in the Chinese architectural milieu through book translation and periodical publication in the early and mid-1980s.⁴² Although *Shijie Jiànzhú* did not display an overt optimism for postmodernism, it was one of the earliest publications that introduced and discussed the topic. The method of employing historical references embodied in some postmodernist works, particularly in the projects of Japanese architects Arata Isozaki and Kisho Kurokawa, extensively presented in the pages of *Shijie Jiànzhú*, had significant influence on emerging architects. For instance, Fu Kecheng, who had contributed to the journal by introducing contemporary Japanese architecture, acknowledged

41 What made Zeng unsatisfied is not the appearance of the building's eclectic forms, but the social and intellectual climate that restrained the expression of critical ideas in the state-run *Jiànzhú Xuebao*, in which Dai had a say.

42 Ying Wang and Hilde Heynen, "Transferring Postmodernism to China: A Productive Misunderstanding", *Architectural Theory Review*, 22:3, (2018): 338-363, DOI: 10.1080/13264826.2018.1516680.

Fig. 13
Fu Kecheng, etc., Beijing Xidan Commercial Complex, published in *Xin Jiànzhú*, 1985, no. 2



14

that the design of the commercial complex both followed the theory of “forms following functions” and absorbed the attitude towards history and context proposed by postmodernism.⁴³ Fu’s position reflected many professionals’ ideas at that time, and was recognized by Zeng, who also maintained a dialectical attitude towards postmodernism—both partly supporting its critique on modernism and its democratic inclination to mass culture, while rejecting its superficial, playful aesthetics revealed in some works.⁴⁴

The third design approach discussed in Zeng’s criticism was better demonstrated in Chai Peiyi’s building that showcased the vitality of modernist explorations and straightforwardly repudiated eclectic vocabularies. Chai’s exhibition center building was composed of a group of white concrete blocks with deliberate geometric consideration, being based on very simple shapes [Fig. 14]. For Zeng, this abstract formal experiment broke the monotony of Beijing’s urban environment and brought a sense of freshness in the domination of Beaux-art-informed eclecticism. The building was designed immediately after Chai returned from Japan, where he spent two years (from 1981 to 1983) working for Kenzo Tange. This state-sponsored overseas training experience, together with the introductions and publications of Japanese architecture (mainly in the pages of *Shijie Jiànzhú*), clearly influenced Chai’s thoughts and deepened his understanding of modern architecture, as he claimed that this formal expression was inspired by some beneficial ingredients of postmodernism, such as the ideas of Tange’s core system and Kurokawa’s third type of space (*huī kōngjiān*, or intermediary space).⁴⁵

43 Fu Kecheng, “Shèjì de lù yīnggāi hěn kuān: cóng běijīng xīdān zònghé shāngyè dàlóu shèjì tánqǐ” [Wining Design for Xidan Commercial Complex, Beijing], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, no. 7 (1985): 19-23.

44 Zeng Zhaofen, “Hòu xiàndài zhūyì lái dào zhōngguó” [The Arrival of Postmodernism in China], *Shijie Jiànzhú*, no. 2 (1987): 59-65.

45 Chai Peiyi, “Zhōngguó guójì zhǎnlǎn zhōngxīn shèjì gòusī” [Design Concept of China International Exhibition Center], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, no. 2 (1986): 51-55.

Fig. 14

Chai Peiyi, Beijing International Exhibition Center, 1985, Courtesy of BIAD

The three consecutive pieces of criticism described above show remarkable consistency in style and approach, “collecting and juxtaposing apparently disparate ideas and concepts for the purpose of mutual illumination.”⁴⁶ Zeng’s idiosyncratic writings constitute a “constellation” of architecture criticism, superimposing a variety of architects, projects, and ideas. His articles demonstrated an ambition to subvert the hegemonic position entangled with eclectic languages and official ideologies. His frank critique of work by established figures and his promotion of emerging figures’ projects largely resonated with the “democratic atmosphere” for academic debate in the 1980s, as the latter’s creative endeavors had largely been despised and repressed by the establishment.

For Zeng, the main task of architecture criticism was to observe significant tendencies, highlight outstanding achievements, introduce emerging architects, and identify flashing thoughts.⁴⁷ His critical activities represented an endeavor to rediscover the existence of “stars” and articulate the meaning of architectural explorations, or to grasp the constellation of architecture from a critical standpoint. His work implied a dynamic reading of the architectural field at that moment, bringing the past into the present with historical consciousness, with significant implications for our perception of architecture criticism.

Conclusion: Reconstructing the Discourse of Modernism

Historically, Zeng’s advocacy of modernism was a delayed effort to resist the eclecticism influenced by the Beaux-Arts tradition. Previous endeavors to promote modernism had appeared in the 1950s, if not earlier. For instance, in 1956, two young undergraduate students from Tsinghua University vehemently embraced modernist architecture characterized by advanced materials and technologies.⁴⁸ Appearing in the particular socio-political context—the heyday of the Hundred Flowers Campaign—this somewhat naive tone presented a form of resistance to the dominant discourse, which followed the slogan “national in form, socialist in content.” However, owing to the dramatic change in the political climate one year later, this manifesto became a catastrophic moment in the transformation of architectural discourse. Subsequently repressed by the ultra-leftist ideologies for more than two decades, the discourse of modernist architecture re-emerged in the 1980s, not as a radical break from the past but as a continuation of the unfinished task of modernity.⁴⁹

46 Graeme Gilloch, *Walter Benjamin: Critical Constellations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 235. For Walter Benjamin, the constellation alludes to an instantaneous, relational figure constituted by a group of visible stars that together comprise an intelligible, legible, and perceptible pattern. It is defined by the relation of the individual objects to each other and to the viewer. Also see Nassima Sahraoui and Caroline Sauter, “Introduction,” in *Thinking in Constellations: Walter Benjamin and the Humanities*, eds. Nassima Sahraoui and Caroline Sauter (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), ix–xviii.

47 Zeng, “Jiànzhù pínglùn de sīkǎo yǔ qídài,” 17.

48 Jiang Weihong and Jin Zhiqiang, “Wǒmen yào xiàndài jiànzhù” [We Need Modern Architecture], *Jiànzhù Xuebào*, no. 6 (1956): 58.

49 Timothy J. Reiss, *The Discourse of Modernism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985).

Modernist architecture in 1980s China can be considered the emergent culture, to use the terminology of British cultural theorist Raymond Williams, who saw culture as a constant process of negotiation with dynamic internal relations between the dominant, emergent, and residual cultures.⁵⁰ For Williams, the emergent culture represented new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships, and new kinds of relationships that were continually created.⁵¹ This definition was tied to a full sense of the dominant. The emergent, which may be alternative or oppositional to the dominant, can be incorporated into the dominant culture through selection.⁵²

The discourse of modernism is not merely a representation of social reality, but also an action constructed by various stakeholders. Whereas *Jiànzhúshī* consistently presented a remarkable constellation of texts, drawings, and projects in the 1980s, through which both editors and contributors communicated their understanding of modernist architecture, *Shijie Jiànzhú* was devoted to presenting global projects, writings and design news, through which domestic professionals were able to keep abreast of the latest international architectural trends, including postmodernism. The former presented alternative voices of emerging academics, architects, and young students once repressed by the dominant institutions and periodicals; the latter showcased dynamic architectural ideas and movements in the world that were otherwise unavailable for many domestic practitioners. These two kinds of commitment, both intellectual and professional, surprisingly converged in Zeng's writing and editing works which played a "double role" in promoting architectural culture in 1980s China.

Zeng's writings were characterized by a spatio-temporal constellation formed by the conjunction of time (both the past and the present), space (architecture erected in different locations), and subject (various architects/contributors). Like his criticisms, the two journals can also be considered a constellation of fragmented, disparate texts, drawings, images, and diagrams, which were painstakingly recomposed, juxtaposed, and presented in a critical way, generating illuminating projects with intellectual, aesthetic tensions and legible patterns in the present form.

Acknowledgements: In this essay, all the Chinese names follow surname first, given name second. I am grateful for the helpful comments from H el ene Janni ere, Paolo Scrivano, and two anonymous reviewers. Thanks are also due to Elena Formia, Ilaria Cattabriga and Loreno Arboritanza for their editorial assistance and to Jiawen Han for her suggestions.

50 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 121–127.

51 *Ibid.*, 123.

52 Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (Verso, London, 1980), 42.

Bibliography

- Chai, Peiyi. "Zhōngguó guójì zhǎnlǎn zhōngxīn shèjì gòusī" [Design Concept of China International Exhibition Center]. *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, no. 2 (1986): 51-55.
- Chen, Zhihua. *Běichuāng zájì* [Miscellaneous Notes Taken by the North Window]. Zhengzhou: Henan Science and Technology Press, 2007.
- Colomina, Beatriz, and Craig Buckley, eds. *Clip, Stamp, Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines, 196X - 197X*. Barcelona: Actar, 2010.
- Dai, Nianci. "Lùn jiànzhú de fēnggé, xíngshì, nèiróng jí qítā: zài fánróng jiànzhú chuàngzuò xuéshù zuòtánhuì shàng de jiǎnghuà" [On Architectural Style, Form and Content], *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, no. 2 (1986): 3-16.
- Ding, Guanghui. *Constructing a Place of Critical Architecture in China: Intermediate Criticality in the Journal Time + Architecture*. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Fu, Kecheng. "Shèjì de lù yīnggāi hěn kuān: cóng běijīng xīdān zònghé shāngyè dàlóu shèjì tánqǐ" [Wining Design for Xidan Commercial Complex, Beijing]. *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, no. 7 (1985): 19-23.
- Gilloch, Graeme. *Walter Benjamin: Critical Constellations*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002.
- Jiang, Weihong, and Jin Zhiqiang. "Wǒmen yào xiàndài jiànzhú" [We Need Modern Architecture]. *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, no. 6 (1956): 58.
- Jin, Qiuye. "Dǎpò fānlǐ bǎochí jùlǐ-zài tán jiànzhú pínglùn hé jiànzhú shíjiàn de guānxi" [Breaking Boundaries While Keeping Distance: On the Relationship between Architectural Criticism and Architectural Practice]. *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, 11 (2020): 13-18.
- Li, Hua, and Shen Yang. "Gàiniàn biànxī: jiànzhú pínglùn de sībiàn shíjiàn" [Conceptual Analysis: A Practice of Analytic Thinking for Architectural Criticism]. *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 201 (2019): 4-5.
- Li, Lingyan. "Méijiè shíjiàn shíjiào xià jiànzhú zhuānyè qíkān duìyú zhōngguó dangdài jiànzhú píngpíng de zuòyòng yánjiū, 1980-1989" [Research on the Role of Architectural Journals in Chinese Contemporary Architectural Criticism from the Perspective of Media Practice, 1980-1989]. *Shídài Jiànzhú*, no. 5 (2018):140-144.
- Lin, Leyi. "Tántán wǒmen jiànzhúshī zhè yèháng" [Discussion on the Profession of Architects]. *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 1 (1979): 7-9.
- Liu, Xiufeng. "Chuàngzào zhōngguó de shèhuì zhūyì de jiànzhú xīn fēnggé" [Creating a New Style of the Chinese Socialist Architecture]. *Jiànzhú Xuebào*, z1 (1959): 3-12.
- Liu, Yuan. *Zhōngguó (dàlù dìqū) jiànzhú qíkān yánjiū* [A Study on the Architectural Periodicals in Mainland China]. Ph.D. diss., South China University of Technology, 2007.
- Lv, Junhua. "Měiguó zhùzhái jiànshè zhōng de jūzhù mìdù hé céngshù wèntí" [The Dwelling Density and Number of Story in American Housing Construction]. *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*, no. 6 (1981): 6-12.
- Mei Chen (Chen, Zhihua). "Shìjiè jiànzhú chuàngkān shíwǔ zhōunián bitán" [Notes on the Fifteenth Anniversary of World Architecture]. *Shìjiè Jiànzhú*, no. 3 (1995): 15.
- Peng, Hualiang, "Huānyíng gèngduō de zhānkèsī shì de jiànzhú pínglùn jiā: dú zéngzhāofèn wénzhāng òugǎn" [Welcoming More Charles Jencks-style Architecture Critics: Reading Zeng Zhaofen's Articles]. *Jiànzhúshī*, 34 (1989): 132-135.
- Reiss, Timothy J. *The Discourse of Modernism*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Piedmont, Susan Carty. "Operative Criticism." *Journal of Architectural Education*, 40:1(1986): 8-13, DOI: 10.1080/10464883.1986.11102649
- Sahraoui, Nassima, and Caroline Sauter. "Introduction." In *Thinking in Constellations. Walter Benjamin and the Humanities*, edited by Nassima Sahraoui and Caroline Sauter, ix-xviii. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018.
- Tafari, Manfredo. *Theories and History of Architecture*. Translated by Giorgio Verrecchia. London: Granada, 1980.
- Wang, Ying, and Hilde Heynen, "Transferring Postmodernism to China: A Productive Misunderstanding". *Architectural Theory Review*, 22:3, (2018): 338-363, DOI: 10.1080/13264826.2018.1516680.

- Wigley, Mark. "Post-operative History." *ANY* 25/26 (2000): 47-53.
- Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Williams, Raymond. *Problems in Materialism and Culture*. London: Verso, 1980.
- Yang, Yongsheng. *Miǎnshù* [Memoirs], edited by Li Ge and Wang Lihui. Beijing: China Architecture and Building Press, 2012.
- Ye, Yang, and Tian Ni. "Zéngzhāofèn fǎngtán" [Interview with Zeng Zhaofen]. *Shijie Jiànzhú*, no. 1 (2016): 70–73.
- Zeng, Zhaofen. "Jiànzhù xíngshì de xījiù yǔ chuàngxīn" [The Appropriation of Old Architectural Forms and Innovation]. *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 13 (1982): 28–40.
- Zeng, Zhaofen. "Jiànzhù pínglùn de sīkǎo yǔ qídài: jiān tán jiànzhù chuàngzuò de zhōng de jīngpài, guāng pài, hǎipài" [The Thoughts and Expectation of Architecture Criticism: Also on the "Beijing School", "Guangzhou School" and "Shanghai School" in Architectural Creation]. *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 17 (1983): 5–18.
- Zeng, Zhaofen. "Jiànzhù chuàngzuò de shōuhuò yǔ qǐshì: xiàng zhōngnián jiànzhù shīmen xuéxí bǐjì" [The Gain and Inspiration of Architectural Creation: Learning Notes from Middle-aged Architects]. *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 26 (1986): 1–46.
- Zeng, Zhaofen. "Hǒu xiàndài zhǔyì lái dào zhōngguó" [The Arrival of Postmodernism in China]. *Shijie Jiànzhú*, no. 2 (1987): 59-65.
- Zeng, Zhaofen. "Yángguāndào yǔ dúmùqiáo: jiànzhù chuàngzuò de sānzhǒng tújìng" [Broad Road and Single-log Bridge: Three Approaches of Architectural Creation]. *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 36 (1989): 1-25.
- Zeng, Zhaofen. *Chuàngzuò yǔ xíngshì: dāngdài zhōngguó jiànzhù pínglùn* [Design and Style: On Contemporary Chinese Architecture]. Tianjin: Tianjin Science and Technology Press, 1989.
- Zeng, Zhaofen. "Chénji yǔ fánróng" [Silence and Prosperity]. *Shijie Jiànzhú*, no. 2 (1995): 27–30, 60.
- Zhang Bo, etc. "Guanyǔ jiànzhù xiàndàihuà hé jiànzhù fēnggé wèntí de yīxiē jiànyì" [Some Opinions on Architectural Modernization and Style]. *Jiànzhù Xuebào*, no. 1 (1979): 26–30.
- Zhang Bo. "Shénsì chúyì: shìtàn jiànzhù zàoxíng yìshù de jìchéng yǔ chuàngxīn" [Discussion on shensi: Exploring the Inheritance and Innovation of Architectural Art], *Jiànzhúshī*, no. 12 (1982): 13–18.
- Zhang, Lufeng, "Jiànzhù pínglùn xiě gěi shéi kàn" [For Who Is Architecture Criticism Written]. *Shijie Jiànzhú*, no. 8 (2014): 76-77.
- Zhou, Buyi. *Zhōubǔyí wénjí* [Anthology of Zhou Buyi], edited by Zeng Zhaofen. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press, 2003.
- Zhou, Rong. "Zǒuxiàng 'xīn pīpíng': dāngdài jiànzhù pínglùn de jiàzhí tīrèn, zhìshí fèngōng yǔ rènwù dìngwèi" [Towards "New Criticism": Value Identification, Intellectual Specialization and Mission Orientation of Contemporary Architectural Criticism]. *Jiànzhù Xuebào*, 11 (2020): 1-5.
- Zhu, Jianfei. "Zǒuxiàng yīgè běntǔ de zhōngguó jiànzhù pīpíng: héjingtáng, shèjì yuàn, dìyuán guānxì jí gètǐ—jítǐ hùnhé dònglì jīzhì" [Towards a Grounded Approach in Architectural Criticism in/on China: A Case Study on He Jingtang, the Design Institute, Geographic Relations and an Individual-Collective Hybridization]. *Jiànzhù Xuebào*, 1 (2018): 6-12.