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Huang Zuoshen and the Bauhaus-Based Architectural Education at St. John's University, Shanghai, 1942–1952

Abstract

This paper examines the transfer of architectural ideas from the Bauhaus to China. Compared to the first generation of Chinese architects who received their Beaux-Arts compositional design training in the United States during the 1930s, those whose architectural and pedagogical ideas are deeply rooted in the Bauhaus school have not been given their justice partially due to the fact that there were no Chinese students at the Bauhaus in Weimar, Dessau, or Berlin from 1919 to 1933. This paper thus focuses on Chinese architect and educator Huang Zuoshen (1915-1975), whose educational background as well as professional and teaching careers are inextricably linked to his encounter of the Bauhaus tradition when he studied at the Graduate School of Design of Harvard University from 1938 to 1941. This paper first introduces Huang's life and then provides an in-depth discussion of Huang's adaptation of Gropius's pedagogical framework at the GSD when he served as the director of the School of Architecture of St. John's University in Shanghai. The paper argues that the architectural curriculum Huang established at SJU was based on his study experience at the GSD, his understanding of Gropius's "total architecture" concept, and, more importantly, his appreciation of the notion of "function" as the "living" spirit of the "New Architecture" that motivated the founding of the Bauhaus.

Keywords

St. John's University, Bauhaus in China, Walter Gropius