International Workshop

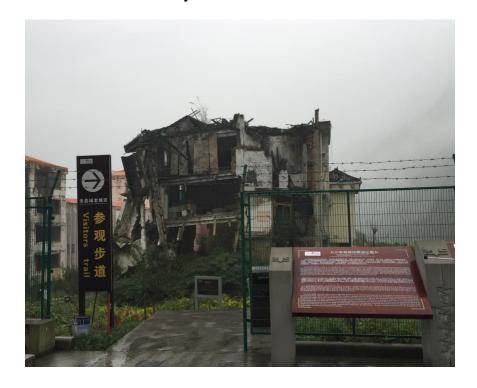**Ruinscapes in Urban China**

中國城市廢墟空間

Friday 21 December 2018

Venue
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Yasumoto International Academic Park
Centre for China Studies
CCS Resources Room (YIA 1118-1119)
Lecture Theatre 1, Esther Lee Building

Ruins, abandoned buildings, decaying places, derelict architecture, produce a diversity of forms, meanings and practices, as well as very specific configurations of Chinese urbanities. While Chinese ruins and decaying processes have been greatly studied in urban studies, this workshop aim at discussing ruinscapes in China from ethnographic perspectives, crisscrossing anthropology, sociology, and visual studies. Residual parts of natural disasters, their preserved or left abandoned ruins, will be the entry point of this reflection, as we commemorate this year the ten-year anniversary of the Wenchuan earthquake (12 May 2008, Sichuan). Papers will show how they easily enter into enriching dialogue with other Chinese ruinscapes outcome of various events and crises such as housing demolition, economic shrinkage, and failed architecture. The workshop will question categories of ruins and raise the complexity of their underlying representations and uses in China. The workshop is conceived in three parts: "traumatic" ruinscape, "ordinary" ruinscape, and visual representations of urban ruins. By discussing from contrasting angles and different academic disciplines, this workshop introduces new insights on the texture, the spatiality, as well as the discourses and social practices of ruinscapes in urban China.

Program

9.30 Opening of the room/morning coffee CCS Resources Room (YIA1118-1119)

9.45 Introduction by Judith Audin (CEFC, Hong Kong/CECMC) & Katiana Le Mentec (CECMC, CNRS)

<u>**10.00 Part 1: "Traumatic" ruinscapes**</u>
The first part of the workshop reflects upon the social impacts of three kinds of ruins, remaining destroyed urban landscape after the Wenchuan earthquake, temporary demolition spaces on the Yangze banks before their submersion by the Three Gorges Dam Reservoir, and the ruins of urban demolition in Shanghai's *lilong*.

10.00 Timmy Chih-Ting Chen (HKBU): ***Remembering Ruins of the Wenchuan Earthquake***

10.30 Katiana LE MENTEC (CNRS, CECMC, EHESS): ***People's Contrasting Interactions with Urban Ruins: A Selection of Ethnographical Cases from Yunyang (Three Gorges Area) and Beichuan (Sichuan)***

11.00 Jérémy CHEVAL (Ecole Urbaine, Lyon): ***Practices around Shanghai lilong's Material Demolition***

11.30 Part 1 discussion

<u>**12.00 Lunch for guest speakers**</u>

<u>**13.30 Part 2: "Ordinary" Ruinscapes – CCS Resources Room (YIA1118-1119)**</u>
The second part of the workshop explores the "ordinary" dimensions of urban ruins in China and the theme of marginality through the case study of how marginal groups (migrant workers) appropriate theses liminal spaces, between wastescapes, and demolished spaces. The strangeness of abandoned buildings will also be examined through the practice of urban exploration. The liminality of ruins and of the way they are "lived in" is a way to rethink the dynamics of economic, social, and ecological crises and to provide another understanding on Chinese urbanities.

13.45 WU Kaming (Centre for Cultural Studies, CUHK): ***Living with Waste***

14.15 LING Minhua (Centre for China Studies, CUHK): ***Container Housing: Living with Demolition in Shanghai***

14.45 Éric FLORENCE (CEFC, Hong Kong): ***Writing and Drawing Destruction/Eviction: An Exploratory Look at a Children Magazine***

15.15 Tong LAM (Department of History, University of Toronto): ***Because There is No Room for Fiction in China's (Extra)ordinary Ruins***

15.45 Part 2 discussion

<u>**16.15 Break**</u>

16.45 Part 3: Envisioning Ruinscapes: Approaches in Visual Arts (Lecture Theatre 1, Esther Lee Building)

The last part of the workshop is dedicated to film screenings on the topic of disaster and destruction work ruins. Screenings will be followed by a collective discussion on the way Chinese ruinscapes are envisioned. How visual arts seize such spaces and landscapes? What kind of messages can they convey that other forms of communication can't? How visual arts and social sciences can collaborate to better understand issues related to urban ruins in contemporary China?

16.45 Presentation of film directors: Chen Qiulin 陈秋林, Gu Tao 古濤, and Xu Ruotao 徐若涛

16.50 Film screenings
- **Screening of "On the Way to the Sea", directed by Gu Tao 古濤, 2010, Canada/China, GreenGround Productions, 20'**
  Filmmaker returns to Wenchuan where he was born and which was hit by the most devastating earthquake in Chinese history with 70,000 deaths, 375,000 seriously injured and over 17,000 people missing. His parents survived, but lost everything. How does an artist deal with this much suffering?
- **Screening of "别赋／Farewell Poem", directed by Chen Qiulin 陈秋林 , 2002, 9'9 min 9 sec**
  Filmmaker returns home, to the Three Gorges Area, at the time the Yangtze river bank cities are on the process to be deconstructed to make place for the Three Gorges Dam Reservoir. Farewell Poem is the first work of a long series of visual art works Chen Qiulin dedicated to the changes of urban landscape, of time and of people.
- **Screening of "江河水 /River，River", directed by Chen Qiulin 陈秋林 , 2005, 16'**
- **Screening of "Yumen", directed by JP Sniadecki，Xu Ruotao 徐若涛 et al. 65'**
  Set in a quasi-ghost town that once thrived with oil in China's arid northwest, Yumen is a haunting, fragmented tale of hungry souls, restless youth, a wandering artist and a lonely woman, all searching for human connection among the town's crumbling landscape. One part "ruin porn", one part "ghost story", and entirely shot on 16mm, the film brings together performance art, narrative gesture, and social realism not only to play with convention and defy genre, but also to pay homage to a disappearing life-world and a fading medium

18.50: Discussion with the filmmakers, the audience, and researchers Timmy Chih-Ting Chen (HKBU), Judith Pernin (CEFC, Hong Kong), and Kristof Van Den Troost (Centre for China Studies, CUHK).

19.30 End of the workshop.

Venue Locations