

Rural Moves – The Songyang Story

Exhibition: 14.03. – 23.04.2019, Gallery

Press conference: Wed 13.03., 11:00, Az W Library

Opening: Wed 13.03., 18:00

Dynamic urbanization processes shape large parts of the world. The young part of the population migrates to the cities, while children and the elderly remain in the rural areas. The revitalization of these regions has been neglected for a long time, causing dramatic socioeconomic and political consequences. In light of rural development being one of the most pressing challenges worldwide, this exhibition shows pioneering strategies, which the young Beijing architect Xu Tiantian has developed and realized in the Chinese region of Songyang.

Encompassing more than four hundred villages, Songyang County lies in the southeastern part of Zhejiang Province and is marked by mountains and the Songyin River. This extraordinary landscape with its gentle hills, rice fields, and tea plantations can be found in traditional Chinese literature and many paintings. Although touristically attractive, the region suffers from rural exodus. Various modernization measures ranging from new roads to high-speed rail lines to digital broadband access in every mountain village still have not produced the desired effect. Now, the regional government and Xu Tiantian are collaborating in an attempt to shape this structural change with precise architectural interventions. Together they are building new manufacturing plants as well as public and cultural places, incorporating not only available resources but also often forgotten traditional handicrafts. Like acupuncture needles, the small-scale, profoundly contextual projects dot the region, forming an extensive network and creating bright cultural, social, and economic future prospects.

Xu Tiantian, the first Chinese architect with her own firm – DnA_Design and Architecture – has, in collaboration with the rural communities, municipal government, and local craftspeople, realized a great number of projects in Songyang. All her building designs were inspired by the built history of the villages, which she has supplemented with contemporary elements and functions. This encourages dynamic and organic growth in the rural areas and at the same time attracts a new generation of modern rural residents.

The exhibition features selected projects, and illustrates them with models, plans and photographs. Films show the new architecture in context, providing insight into the culture and also the history of the people of Songyang.

Exhibition design: Xu Tiantian, DnA_Design and Architecture, Beijing
in cooperation with Aedes Architekturforum, Berlin

Curators: Eduard Kögel, Hans-Jürgen Commerell

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