Academic Seminar

Department of English, TAIPEI TECH

Title: Stairs as Public Spaces: Stair culture in Hong Kong

Speaker:

Melissa Cate Christ, Research Assistant Professor, School of Design, Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Abstract:

Due in part to historical street and development patterns, topography and building restrictions, Hong Kong Island’s urban development and population density is one of the highest in the world. Within this densely populated area, stairs are a crucial typology of vernacular pedestrian infrastructure that have received relatively little public or scholarly attention with respect to their role in creating and sustaining Hong Kong as a walkable city with a unique 'Stair Culture'.

This paper presents some initial findings and ongoing research from the RGC funded pilot project, “Hong Kong Stair Archive: Documenting the Walkable City” to argue that in this dense hilly context, stairs act not only as movement corridors which allow access to areas otherwise inaccessible (and which likely would not have been so intensely built if not for their context on this rapidly developed island), but also as vibrant public spaces with crucial social, cultural, environmental, and heritage value. The paper concludes with a reflection on stairs as public spaces and how the project can contribute to the effort to document and preserve Hong Kong’s cultural landscape as well as raise awareness amongst the public and academic community about the role of stairs in creating and sustaining a walkable city.

Chair : Dr Louis Lo (Associate Professor, Department of English, TAIPEI TECH)

Date : 11 October 2016

Time : 10:10am – 12:00 noon

Venue : Room 401, General Studies Building

Bio:

Melissa Cate Christ is a registered landscape architect, a Research Assistant Professor of Design at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and the founding director of transverse studio, a collaborative practice which intersects trajectories of landscape, culture, urbanism and infrastructure through documentary processes of investigation, design and activism. Prior to teaching at PolyU, Melissa was an Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Hong Kong and a designer at Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd. Melissa has a Master of Landscape Architecture from the University of Toronto and a Bachelor of Liberal Arts from St. John’s College. http://www.transversestudio.com/