

Complexity and Contradiction in the Works of Architect Chen Chi-kwan: Examining the "Unconventional" Innovations in the Planning and Design of the Academy of Preparatory Programs for Overseas Chinese Students

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ABSTRACT

The Academy of Preparatory Programs for Overseas Chinese Students, as Chen Chi-kwan's architectural project in his later years, was truly a spatial and conceptual innovation rather than a seemingly succession of his previous approaches. The way of designing the Academy might seem to deviate from traditional architectural norms if you view it from a partial perspective. However, when you shift your position and view it holistically, such seemingly unconventional design decisions paradoxically make sense. In fact, this phenomenon coincidentally aligned with Robert Venturi's concept of "Both-And" from his book "Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture" – a monograph that Chen Chi-kwan himself had in his collection. The author finds it the key concept to thoroughly understand and interpret Chen's unconventional and seemingly contradictory planning and design decisions for the Academy of Preparatory Programs for Overseas Chinese Students. Combined with "Visual Space" and "Pictorial Space" analytical reading of Chen Chi-kwan's "Cosmic Vertigo" series of paintings, the author reveals Chen's representation and insights into Taoist Cosmology and the Circular World in the design of the Academy.

Keywords: Both-And; Chen Chi-kwan; Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture; Taoist Cosmology; The Academy of Preparatory Programs for Overseas Chinese Students