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Lin Huiyin: China's First Female Architect in Art, Architecture, and Literature

Abstract:

Lin Huiyin (Phyllis Whei Yin Lin, 1904–1955) occupies a distinctive place in modern Chinese cultural history as an architect, architectural historian, and writer. Often regarded as China's first female architect, she was educated partly in Europe and the United States*, where she encountered architectural, literary, and artistic discourses that informed her intellectual formation. Her work developed at the intersection of these fields and cannot be adequately understood within a single disciplinary framework.

Because of the historical and institutional conditions of her time, Lin's opportunities for independent architectural practice were limited. Her significance lies not only in architectural design, but also in her scholarly contribution to the study and documentation of Chinese architectural heritage. In this respect, she participated in an important moment in the formation of modern architectural history in China, combining close observation, historical inquiry, and cultural interpretation.

At the same time, Lin Huiyin's literary work reveals a particular sensitivity to form, emotion, memory, and spatial experience. Her intellectual and creative work suggests that architecture was, for her, more than a technical or formal discipline. It was also bound to questions of history, aesthetic experience, and human life.

This presentation examines Lin Huiyin's position across architecture, art, and literature, with particular attention to the relation between disciplinary knowledge and humanistic understanding in her work. By revisiting her contributions, the talk reflects on how architecture may be approached not only as construction or heritage, but also as a medium through which cultural memory, social values, and human experience are articulated.

* In 1924, Lin traveled to the United States to study architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, US. As the Department of Architecture at Penn did not admit women until 1934, she was formally enrolled in the School of Fine Arts. Nevertheless, Lin completed all the core and advanced courses offered by the architecture program, effectively undertaking a full architectural education despite institutional restrictions. In recognition of her academic work and historical contribution, the University of Pennsylvania posthumously awarded Lin Huiyin a Bachelor of Architecture degree on May 18, 2024, with the graduation year officially recorded as "1927".



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Short Bio:

Priv. Doz. Dr. Yue Zhao is a senior scientist and faculty member at the University Hospital of Cologne, specializing in experimental oncology and surgical research. She earned her Ph.D. at Ludwig-Maximilians University Munich. Since 2016, she has led the Surgical Oncology Research Laboratory at the Clinic for General, Visceral, Tumor, and Transplantation Surgery in Cologne.

Her research focuses on tumor stem cells, metastasis, and therapy resistance. In 2024, she received her Venia Legendi (habilitation) in Experimental Surgery. Beyond the lab, Dr. Zhao actively promotes interdisciplinary innovation in healthcare. She co-hosted the 2023 EQUALS-EU Hackathon on women's health and leads initiatives such as the EuniWell Onco-Aging project and the EU NatureLab, exploring nature-based health interventions. Dr. Zhao combines translational cancer research with academic mentorship and international collaboration in precision medicine and well-being science.

In the summer of 2025, Dr. Zhao was elected to Class II of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts (EASA) in recognition of her sustained commitment to the integration of science and the arts.