Clifford Pearson Joins USC School of Architecture as Director of the American Academy in China

Los Angeles, October 14, 2015—Distinguished journalist and long-time deputy editor of Architectural Record, Clifford Pearson, has been appointed Director of the USC School of Architecture’s American Academy in China (AAC) by Dean Qingyun Ma. Now in its ninth year, AAC is one of the world’s leading institutes for the interdisciplinary study of contemporary China through the lens of the arts, architecture, and the humanities.

Pearson, who brings an unparalleled understanding of the critical issues facing architects and planners in China, will take the helm at AAC in January 2016. As director of AAC he will oversee operations of the program and expand its reach, both within USC and globally. “It’s a great program and has already created a fertile dialogue between the US and China,” says Pearson. “My goal is to raise its profile so it becomes a magnet for the best students and faculty.”

“He has a tremendous ability to identify great architecture and can always put it within its cultural context and historical confluence,” says Dean Ma. “He has a deep understanding of China and where it’s headed.”

One of Pearson’s first tasks will be putting together the 2016 program and turning what is currently mostly a summer program into a 12-month-a-year program of events and initiatives in Los Angeles and China.

Pearson has a long history with China and Asia, having overseen Architectural Record’s coverage of the region for nearly two decades and serving as editor-in-charge of Architectural Record China from 2005-2013. In this capacity he put together four issues a year, organized events in China, and directed the Chinese iteration of Record’s Good Design is Good Business Awards program. He also directed the magazine’s partnership with Tongji University’s School of Architecture in Shanghai.

"Cliff not only has a deep knowledge of contemporary architecture in China and elsewhere, but he has a powerful network of relationships across the profession and around the globe,” says Cathleen McGuigan, editor in chief at Architectural Record. “He is an extremely resourceful journalist and critic who will bring his rich experience in the field to his new position at USC."
Outside of his work at *Record*, he serves as co-director of Asia Design Forum, a non-profit think tank that provokes debate about the built environment. In this role he organized conferences and symposia in Beijing, Shanghai, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Hong Kong. He has also served on advisory committees for programs at the Center for Architecture in New York, including exhibitions such as *Practical Utopias: Global Urbanism in Hong Kong, Seoul, Shanghai, Singapore, and Tokyo* (2013-14) and *Hong Kong at 15: Redefining the Public Realm* (2013) and discussions such as the Global Dialogues (2014).

Armed with all this on-the-ground experience, as well as a long catalog of articles he has authored related to architecture and development in China, Pearson has the insight and experience to take AAC to the next level as a truly global forum for research, scholarship, and discussions on the significance and implications of architecture and urban change in China.

In addition to directing AAC, Pearson will also be teaching a course on architectural journalism and will continue with *Architectural Record* as a contributing editor, with a focus on stories related to China.

### ABOUT CLIFFORD PEARSON

Clifford Pearson is a deputy editor of *Architectural Record*. Since joining the magazine in 1989, he has written on a broad range of topics—from individual projects such as the MAXXI museum in Rome by Zaha Hadid and the new Whitney Museum by Renzo Piano to essays on school design and housing. He serves as a director of Asia Design Forum, a nonprofit think tank that organizes events and generates dialogue among the design community and the general public. He is the author of *Indonesia: Design and Culture*, published by the Monacelli Press in 1998, and the editor of *Modern American Houses*, published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., in 1996 and reissued in 2005. In 2003, he received a Media Fellowship from the U.S.-Japan Foundation and spent two months in Japan examining “Technology and Tradition in Contemporary Japanese Architecture.” In 2004 and 2006, he was the co-curator of the U.S. Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale. Mr. Pearson holds a master’s degree in architectural history from Columbia University and a bachelor’s degree in urban studies from Cornell University.

### ABOUT THE USC AMERICAN ACADEMY IN CHINA

Founded in 2007 by Dean Qingyun Ma of the USC School of Architecture, the USC American Academy in China (AAC) was established as the primary destination for universities throughout the United States and world to study architecture, the arts, and humanities in China. AAC is dedicated to the advancement of scholarly exchange and research in these fields.

The USC American Academy in China is a permanent institute in China dedicated to interdisciplinary exchange, innovation, and research in the arts, architecture, and humanities. It is the first-of-its-kind institution devoted to fostering explorations that deepen understandings of China’s past, present, and possible futures across a broad spectrum of disciplines—all under one roof. This singular institution brings together international scholars, architects, and artists with their Chinese counterparts for immersive, cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary investigations that seek to learn from China rather than imposing western modes of knowledge upon it.

The American Academy in China seeks to position itself as the preeminent global institution for research and creative production concerning China, one of the most rapidly changing nations on Earth. Just as the American Academy in Rome is important for understanding the legacy of the west, the American Academy in China is vital for understanding contemporary China, its path moving forward, and its significance to the world.