

## Arts and Visual Cultures of Modern and Contemporary China (since 1800)

Class meetings: Wednesdays 11:05 AM-12:55 PM

Classroom: Main Building Room 201

Convenor: Dr. Panpan Yang

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Office hours: Thursdays, 4:00pm-6:00pm and by email appointment

Office: Main Building Room 408



### COURSE DESCRIPTION

The graduate seminar explores the multipolarity of the field of Chinese art and visual culture today by investigating the historical methodologies, canons, practices, and other forces by which it has been shaped. The course participates in the visual culture movement by including not only painting, calligraphy, and sculpture but also illustrated newspapers, pictorials, fashion, photography, film, animation, video art, and installation. The course follows a loosely chronological structure with flexibility to explore diachronic themes. We'll explore how media technologies have shaped art practices, cultural productions, and social aesthetics from the early modern/late imperial period to the present. We'll investigate how one medium remediates another at moments of rupture in art history and/or in times of political turbulence. We'll also discuss the roles of city life, travel, and modern women. There is emphasis throughout on current events and initiatives in the field, including the

ways art is displayed, accessed, and communicated through exhibitions, websites and cinematic means.

## **CLASS ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION**

This course is intended for all enrolled students, including those with mental, physical, or cognitive disabilities, illnesses, injuries, impairments, or any other condition that tends to negatively affect one's equal access to education. If, at any point, you find yourself not able to fully access the space, content, and experience of this course, you are welcome to contact me by email or during office hours to discuss your specific needs.

## **METHOD OF ASSESSMENT**

- Participation in and contribution to the module seminars (worth 10%)
- One 2,000-word essay (worth 60%)
  - ☞ Research topic (in the form of an email + an attached image) due Friday March 17, 2023 by 11:59 PM
  - ☞ Research essay due Friday April 17, 2023 by 11:59 PM
- One collaborative presentation (worth 30%)

## **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

Attendance in class is mandatory. It is also important to be on time. More than 1 absence or tardiness will adversely affect your participation grade. You are expected to do all required readings (and viewings) in advance of the seminar for which they are due. Participation includes engaging in discussion, asking relevant questions, actively listening to other students, and post information about ongoing or upcoming art exhibitions that you find relevant to the module.

## **PLAGIARISM**

Please consult the student manual on university policies and regulations that make it clear that SOAS will not tolerate cheating and plagiarism.

## **COLLABORATIVE PRESENTATION**

In Week 1 or Week 2, you will be asked to sign up for one collaborative presentation.

The task of the collaborative presentation on a given topic is to contextualize the artists and artworks, readings, and videos, make sense of the relations between the arguments from different thinkers, call attention to important passages, identify issues for debate, and take questions, if any, from the whole class.

Each of the group members are expected to read some optional readings on a given topic. In the meantime, be sure that your presentation is accessible to those who did not have time to cover the optional materials. One group of students will use ONE PowerPoint. If possible, showcase your graphic design sensibility when making the PowerPoint. One member of the group will be responsible for sending the PowerPoint as an email attachment by 11:00 AM the day BEFORE the group presentation. Have all other members of your group cc'd when emailing the module convenor. You are encouraged to select images as platforms for

discussion. Occasionally the convenor might have written instructions for the group. Groups are also encouraged to meet in advance to practice the presentation. During the group presentation, each member's speech part should be no more than 7 minutes. A tea timer will be used as a visual reminder of the remaining time for your presentation.

### **STATEMENT ON METHODS OF DELIVERY**

Unless otherwise noted, the class meetings will take place in person, and they will not be recorded. The convenor reserves the right to deliver a limited number of class sessions over Zoom for Covid-19, train strike, university strike, or other unexpected reasons. The convenor also reserves the right to use pre-recorded lecturers to substitute for a limited number of synchronous class sessions.

### **READINGS**

All required readings and most optional readings are available on Moodle.

### **BOOKS FOR GENERAL REFERENCE**

Craig Clunas, *Art in China*, second edition (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2009)

Julia F. Andrews and Shen Kuiyi, *The Art of Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012)

Julia F. Andrews and Shen Kuiyi, *A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-century China* (Guggenheim Museum Publications, 1998)

<https://archive.org/details/centuryincrisismooandr/page/282/mode/2up?ref=ol&view=theater>

Wu Hung, *Contemporary Chinese Art: A History, 1970s>2000s* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2014).

Wu Hung and Peggy Wang, ed., *Contemporary Chinese Art: Primary Documents* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010)

Lü Peng, *A History of Art in 20th-Century China* (Paris: Somogy Art Publishers, 2016)  
[Chinese edition is also available]

## CLASS SCHEDULE

*subject to change*

### **Week 1 (January 11) Introduction: Re-envisioning China's Modernity**

Required:

*The Last Emperor* (dir. Bernardo Bertolucci, 1987, 163 min)

Optional:

Shane McCausland, 'The Flight of the Dragon: Modernism in China and Art at the Last Emperor's Court-in-exile,' *Archives of Asian Art*, 70, 1 (2020): 51-83.

Craig Clunas, *Chinese Art, 1911-1976: A Connected History* [3 lectures]

<https://www.gresham.ac.uk/series/chinese-art-1911-1976-a-connected-history/>

In-class activity:

Viewing (1) Chen Shu's *Album of Flowers*, dated 1681 and (2) the fan presented by Henry Puyi, the last Emperor of China, to his tutor Sir Reginald Johnston, both in SOAS Library's special collections

### **Week 2 (January 18) When Photography Came to China**

Required:

Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, 92-97

Gu Yi, 'What's in a Name? Photography and the Reinvention of Visual Truth in China, 1840-1911,' *Art Bulletin* 95.1 (2013): 120-138.

Optional:

Lang Jingshan [Long Chin-San], 'Composite Picture and Chinese Art' and 'How to Make Composite Pictures' in *Techniques in Composite Picture-Making* (Taipei: The China Series Publishing Committee, 1958). [The book has not page numbers]

Familiar yourself with the following digital databases:

*Shen Bao* 1872-1949

Dacheng Old Journal Full-text Database

<https://www.soas.ac.uk/library/resources/a-z/chinese/>

Media History Digital Library

<https://mediahist.org>

### **Week 3 (January 25) Souls Haunted by Painting: Chinese Artists in a Strange Land**

Required:

Craig Clunas, 'The Nation,' in *Chinese Painting and Its Audiences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 155-191.

Craig Clunas, 'Chinese Art and Chinese Artists in France, 1924-25,' *Arts Asiatiques* 44 (1989): 100-106.

Julia Andrews and Shen Kuiyi, 'The Japanese Impact on the Republican Art World: The Construction of Chinese Art History as a Modern Field,' *Twentieth Century China* 32.1 (2006), 4-35.

Optional:

*La Peintre* (aka. *A Soul Haunted by Painting*, dir. Huang Shuqin, 1993/1994, 91 min) [A biopic of Pan Yuliang]

Julia Andrews and Shen Kuiyi, 'Traditionalism as a Modern Stance: The Chinese Women's Calligraphy and Painting Society,' *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 11.1 (1999), 1-30.

#### **Week 4 (February 3) Visiting the Victoria and Albert Museum**

\* Note the special date, time, and location

Meeting Dr Xiaoxin Li, Curator, Asian Department at 1:00 PM at the T.T. Tsui Gallery, Room 44, The V&A Museum

Required:

Explore collections of East Asian Art at The V&A Museum

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/e/east-asia/>

#### **Week 5 (February 8) The New Woman: Print, Stage and Screen**

Required:

Browse *Ling long Women's Magazine*, 1931-1937

<https://archive.org/details/cullinglong>

Browse *Modern Sketch*, 1934-1937 [missing one issue]

*New Women* (dir. Cai Chusheng, 1934/1935, 106 min)

Kristine Harris, 'The New Woman Incident: Cinema, Scandal, and Spectacle in 1935 Shanghai' in *Transnational Chinese Cinemas*, edited by Sheldon Lu, 277-302.

Optional:

Francesca Dal Lago, 'Crossed Legs in 1930s Shanghai: How "Modern" the Modern Woman?' *East Asian History* 19 (June 2000): 103-144.

Zhang Zhen, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937*, 244-297, especially 261-266.

#### **READING WEEK**

No class!

(... or maybe you can imagine this is a week about the art of the Cultural Revolution)

Optional:

Browse Chinese propaganda posters

<https://chineseposters.net/>

Julia Andrews, 'The Art of the Cultural Revolution,' in Richard King ed., *Art in Turmoil: The Chinese Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 27-57.

Eugene Wang, 'The Winking Owl: Visual Effect and Its Art Historical Thick Description', *Critical Inquiry* 26.3 (2000): 435-473.

## **Week 6 (February 22) Memories of the Stars Exhibition, or the Emergence of Unofficial Art in Post-Cultural Revolutionary China**

Required:

Wu Hung, *Contemporary Chinese Art: A History*, 9-51.

Huang Rui, 'Preface to the First Stars Art Exhibition (*Xingxing Meizhan*)' (1979)

Wang Keping, 'Memoirs of the Stars Exhibition' in *Wang Keping* (Hong Kong, 2009)

Optional:

Wu Hung, 'From "Modern" to "Contemporary": A Case in Post-Cultural Revolutionary Art,' *Contemporaneity*, vol. 1 (2011): 36-40.

## **Week 7 (February 27) The Apartment Gallery: Sheltering a Dream**

\* Note there is an optional webinar over Zoom

3:30 PM to 5:00 PM: Guest lecture and discussion with Hai Liang, Echo He, and Iris Zhang at Fou Gallery, New York

### **(March 1) '85 Art New Wave and the China/Avant-Garde Exhibition of 1989**

Required:

Gao Minglu, 'The Map of the '85 Avant-Garde Movement,' 'The China/Avant-Garde Exhibition of 1989,' in *Total Modernity and the Avant-Garde in Twentieth-Century Chinese Art*, 101-139, 141-166.

Li Xianting, 'The Significance is Not the Art' (1986), 'Confessions of a China/Avant-garde Curator' (1989)

*Bumming in Beijing* (dir. Wu Wenguang, 1990, 69 min)

Optional:

Wu Hung, *Contemporary Chinese Art: A History*, 52-89.

Explore *Materials of the Future: Documenting Contemporary Chinese Art from 1980-1990*, Asia Art Archive

<https://aaa.org.hk/en/collections/search/archive/materials-of-the-future-documenting-contemporary-chinese-art-from-1980-1990-1980-1990-li-xianting/object/interview-li-xianting-english-subtitles>

## Week 8 (March 8) The Enduring Passion for Ink

### Required:

Explore *Ink Art: Past as Present in Contemporary China* at the Met

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2013/ink-art>

James Elkins, 'A New Definition of Chinese Ink Painting' [The essay was commissioned, edited, paid, and then rejected by Hearn, for the 2013 exhibition at the Met]

Wu Hung, *Contemporary Chinese Art: A History*, 310–337.

### Optional:

Joan Kee, 'The Curious Case of Contemporary Ink Painting', *Art Journal* 69.3 (2010): 88-113.

*The Enduring Passion for Ink* (dir. Britta Erickson, 2013, 120 min) [especially the 'chapters' on Wang Dongling, Xu Bing, Yang Jiechang, and Bingyi]

*The New Book of the Mountains and Seas* (dir. Qiu Anxiong, 2006; 2009; 2017, 30 min each)

*The Character of Characters* (dir. Xu Bing, 2012, 17 min)

### In-class screening:

*White Snake* (dir. Ruan Yunting, 2007, 5 min)

## Week 9 (March 15) Porcelains in Contemporary Chinese Art

### Required:

Ai Weiwei, Sunflower Seeds: Artist Interview

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PueYywpkJW8>

Explore <https://www.aiweiweiseeds.com>

Explore *The Allure of Matter: Smart Museum of Art Virtual Tours*

[https://theallureofmatter.org/virtual-tours/?mc\\_cid=bdc9fd4c66&mc\\_eid=d68561496f%20%20like](https://theallureofmatter.org/virtual-tours/?mc_cid=bdc9fd4c66&mc_eid=d68561496f%20%20like)

### Optional:

Ai Weiwei, *Ai Weiwei's Blog: Writings, Interviews, and Digital Rants, 2006-2009* (The MIT Press, 2011)

### In-class screening:

*Mr Sea* (dir. Geng Xue, 2014, 15 min)

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## Week 10 (March 22) Being in the World: Contemporary Chinese Art as Global Art

### Required:

Melissa Chiu, 'Theories of Being Outside: Diaspora and Chinese Artists,' in *Contemporary Art in Asia: A Critical Reader*, 327-345.

Hou Hanru, 'On the Mid-Ground: Chinese Artists, Diaspora and Global Art (1999),' in *On the Mid-Ground*, 74-89.

Optional:

Philip Tinari, 'Between Palimpsest and Teleology: The Problem of Chinese Contemporary Art,' *Art and China after 1989: Theater of the World*, 51-66.

☞ Research essay due Monday April 17, 2023 by 11:59 PM