HISTORY OF ART DEPARTMENT
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

HONOUR SCHOOL OF HISTORY OF ART:

Art in China since 1911
Trinity Term 2010
Professor Craig Clunas

Hai Bo, ‘They’, 1999

Tuesdays 11-1

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Course description:

This course, for which no prior experience of Chinese art or history is required, will provide an overview of developments in the visual arts of China from the end of the imperial period to the present, and will relate them to changes within the broader culture. How did the material forms and contexts of art, as well as the social roles of its makers and audiences, change over this period? Students will study a range of visual materials, from painting in ‘traditional’ and ‘western’ formats, through graphics and photography, to the performance and installation art of more recent times. They will engage with the issues, central to the artists of this period, of how to make art that is both ‘modern’ and ‘Chinese’, and will look at the ways the turbulent politics of twentieth century China have been expressed in visual terms, and have in turn inflected the visual images which have been produced.

Tutorials:
These will be held in Weeks 2, 4, 6, and 8, times to be arranged. You will write two essays and prepare two ‘virtual exhibition’ Powerpoints, the details of which I will explain when we meet. Topics are as follows:

1: Essay
- To what extent is Chinese art of the Republican period ‘a dialogue with the West’?

2: Powerpoint ‘Virtual exhibition’
- Realism in Chinese art 1911-1976

3: Essay
- To what extent is the programme laid out in Mao’s ‘Yan’an Forum’ manifested in Chinese art after 1949?

4: Powerpoint ‘Virtual exhibition’
- How Chinese is ‘Chinese contemporary art’?

General background reading on modern Chinese art (arranged in order of their date of publication):
Mayching Kao ed., Twentieth century Chinese Painting (Hong Kong, 1988)
Scott Minick and Jiao Ping, Chinese Graphic Design in the Twentieth Century (London, 1990)
Richard Kraus, Brushes with Power (Berkeley, 1991)
Jerome Silbergeld, Contradictions: Artistic Life, the Socialist State and the Chinese painter Li Huasheng (Seattle, 1993)
John Clark ed., Modernity in Asian Art (Broadway NSW, 1993)
Stefan Landsberger, Chinese Propaganda Posters: From Revolution to Modernisation (Amsterdam, 1995)
Michael Sullivan, Art and Artists of Twentieth-century China (Berkeley, 1996)
Twentieth-Century Chinese Painting: Tradition and Innovation (Hong Kong, 1996)
Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, Ken Lum, Zheng Shengtian, eds, Shanghai Modern, 1919-1945 (Munich, 2004)
John Clark Modern Asian Art (Honolulu, 1998)
Stefan Landsberger, *Paint it Red: Fifty Years of Chinese Propaganda Posters* (Groningen, 1999)
Wu Hung, *Chinese Art at the Crossroads* (London, 2001)
Maxwell K. Hearn and Judith G. Smith eds., *Chinese Art Modern Expressions* (New York, 2001)
Huang Rui *Beijing 798: Beijing 798 : reflections on art, architecture and society in China* (Hong Kong, 2004)

**Web-Based Resources:**

In addition to printed sources, there are some excellent websites around:

http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/ is the online version of the *Dictionary of Art*. Material on China is of variable quality, but do not overlook this resource.


This will probably be the single most useful website to you for the earlier parts of the course.


http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/departs/arthistory/department/general/MCAA_Bibliography.pdf is a huge bibliography of modern Asian art, maintained by John Clark at the University of Sydney

http://www.stanford.edu/dept/art/china is a ‘Bibliography of Contemporary Chinese art’ maintained by Britta Erikson of Stanford University

http://www.yishujournal.com Website of *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* (gives contents pages, and complete run in CC Office)

Some useful non-art sites:

http://www.sino.uni-heidelberg.de/igcs/ is an ‘Internet Guide for Chinese Studies’

http://chp.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/ ‘Historical Photographs of China’

http://factsanddetails.com/china ‘Facts and Details: China’

http://thechinabeat.blogspot.com/ ‘The China Beat: Blogging How the East is Read’

There are links to these sites and other on the Weblearn site for this course.
WEEKLY TOPICS AND READINGS

Week 1:
Avant-garde and tradition in Republican China 1911-1937
The idea of an ‘avant-garde’ is an important one in Chinese art of the 20th century and beyond, appearing for the first time in the 1920s. But what does it mean and how should we interpret it? What does it tell us about the relationship of art and history in China? The centuries old practices of brush and ink painting continued to coexist in 20th century China with new forms of pictorial practice – how were they sustained in terms of both artists and audiences?

- Ralph Croizier, ‘Post-Impressionists in Pre-War Shanghai: The Juelanshe (Storm Society) and the Fate of Modernism in Republican China’, in John Clark ed., Modernity in Asian Art Broadway NSW, 1993, pp. 135-54
- John Clark Modern Asian Art (Honolulu, 1998), pp. 217-236
- Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, Ken Lum, Zheng Shengtian, eds, Shanghai Modern, 1919-1945 (Munich, 2004)

The Art of Xu Beihong (Hong Kong, 1988)
John Clark Modern Asian Art (Honolulu, 1998), pp. 155-171
Wen C. Fong, Between Two Cultures: Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Chinese Paintings from the Robert H. Ellsworth Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York and New Haven, 2001)
Ralph Croizier, Art and Revolution in Modern China: The Lingnan (Cantonese) School of Painting, 1906-1951 (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1988)
Aida Yuan Wong, Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-Style Painting in Modern China (Honolulu, 2006)

Week 2:
Mass Media and Visual Culture in the Republic 1911-1949
China in the first half of the 20th century saw a massive explosion in new forms of picturing practice, from the cinema to advertising. This session will look at some of these forms and ask how they related to new audiences for art and visual culture.
• Scott Minick and Jiao Ping, *Chinese Graphic Design in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1990)
• [http://www.ssc.uwo.ca/history/nianhua/ ‘The Nianhua Gallery’](http://www.ssc.uwo.ca/history/nianhua/)

Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern* (Cambridge MA, 1999)


Ng Chun Bong ed., *Chinese Woman and Modernity: Calendar posters of the 1910s-1930s* (Hong Kong, 1996)

**Week 3:**

*Art and politics in an age of war and revolution, 1927-1949*

The visual arts were closely involved in Chinese resistance to Japanese invasion, and in the middle decades of the 20th century became intensely politicised. This session will look at one aspect of this process, through the writings on art of the Communist leader Mao Zedong.

• B.S. McDougall, *Mao Zedong's 'Talks at the Yan'an conference on literature and art'*. (Ann Arbor, 1980)
• David Holm, *Art and Ideology in Revolutionary China* (Oxford, 1991)
• Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1994)

**Week 4:**

*Ideology and institutions in the People’s Republic, 1949-1964*

The Communist victory in 1949 created a whole new set of artistic institutions in China, as well as a new political and cultural context for the arts; how did artists respond to the opportunities and threats of the new situation?

• John Clark *Modern Asian Art* (Honolulu, 1998), pp. 239-59
Week 5:
Cultural production and cultural revolution, 1964-1976
How was culture adapted in the period of intense politicisation now known as ‘Maoism’? This session looks at the most prominent forms of cultural production during the 1960s and 1970s from a strictly political vision to one which was more left. We look at political posters, model operas and see how representations of the utopian vision changed in the later Cultural Revolution and after Mao’s death.

- [http://www.morningsun.org/](http://www.morningsun.org/) ‘A Film and Website about Cultural Revolution’


Week 6:
Art in the Reform Era, 1976-1989
In this session we look at a neo-realist movement which developed in the 1970s, known as ‘Scar art’. Paintings were produced which described the personal pain which the Cultural Revolution inflicted on individuals, emphasising emotions of empathy and pity. We look too at how painters responded to changed political and economic conditions as the era of reform got under way.


**Week 7:**
**The Avant-garde, 1979–1993**

The 1980s were years of rapid transformation in all forms of culture in China. We examine two key turning points in Chinese art production during these years which led to the development of diverse and radical work by the end of the decade, the ‘1985 movement’ and the 1989 ‘China/Avantgarde’ exhibition, held at the National Art Gallery in Beijing.

- Wu Hung, *Transience: Chinese Experimental Art at the End of the Century* (Chicago, 1999)

**Week 8:**
**Globalisation and the global market for ‘contemporary Chinese art’**

In 1993, contemporary art from China came to be exhibited in international exhibitions around the world. This week we look at the ways in which Chinese art came to be ‘packaged’ and defined as a novel addition to Western exotica. What effect does globalisation have on the production of art from China? How does one unravel the complex relationships between artist, consumer and global capital?

- Wu Hung, *Chinese Art at the Crossroads* (London, 2001)


Wu Hung and Christopher Phillips eds., *Between past and future : new photography and video from China* (Chicago, 2004)

*The Real Thing: Contemporary Art from China*, Tate Liverpool (Liverpool, 2007)


Christopher Noe, Xenia Piech, Cordelia Steiner, *Young Chinese Artists: the Next Generation* (Munich, 2008)


Artists websites:

http://www.caiguoqiang.com/  Cai Guo-qiang

http://www.caofei.com/  Cao Fei

http://www.zhanghuan.com/  Zhang Huan