

## **CULS5401 Contemporary Arts & Cultural Interactivity**

Prof. Pedith Chan

Tel: 3943 5270

Email: [pedithchan@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:pedithchan@cuhk.edu.hk)

### **Course Description**

The course examines contemporary art and its institutions in China from a global perspective. Shifting away from a Euromerican-centric view of art history to a more inclusive perspective, it aims to introduce students to key issues, art movements, institutions, methodologies, and concepts pertinent to contemporary art in China through a global lens. The course is structured thematically into two parts. The first part addresses the definition and periodisation of contemporary art in the “periphery”, the transition from modernism to contemporary art, and the exploration of various mediums and art movements. The second part focuses on the art institutions that enable, constrain, and shape our understanding and reception of Chinese contemporary art. By concentrating on examples from China, Hong Kong, and East Asia, the course encourages students to critically examine and reflect on the binaries of local/global, center/periphery, modern/traditional, and East/West. The course will be complemented by guest lecture and fieldtrips in Hong Kong.

### **Learning Outcomes**

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of theories, terminology, and methods of contemporary art history;
- Demonstrate understanding of the themes, issues, and debates of Chinese contemporary art relating to social contexts, and the ways in which artworks are circulated and received through in-depth analysis of chosen examples;
- Identify and compare different approaches and case studies of contemporary art in China, and its institutions and practices;
- Assess critically the materials and themes explored in the course through the use of particular examples;
- Demonstrate the capability to apply critical theories and methodologies to analyse contemporary art and its institutions;
- Demonstrate knowledge and skills applicable to art historical scholarship and curatorship.

## **Weekly Topics**

### **Week 1 Global Modernisms and Global Contemporary Art**

This session questions the Euro-American framework of contemporary art and discusses the debates, methods, and concepts related to it. It also clarifies, or even complicates, the definition of Chinese contemporary art.

#### **Required**

Clark, John. "Is the Modernity of Chinese Art Comparable? An Opening of a Theoretical Space." *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 10 (June 2014): 1–27.

Davidson, Jane Chin and Amelia Jones, "The Eurocentrism of Contemporary Art, Staging the Project", *A Companion to Contemporary Art in a Global Framework*, Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2024, pp.1-14.

Smith, Terry. "The State of Art History: Contemporary Art." *Art Bulletin* 92, no. 4 (December 2010): 366-83.

#### **Recommended**

Enwezor, Okwui. "Place-Making or in the 'Wrong Place': Contemporary Art and the Postcolonial Condition." In *Former West: Art and the Contemporary After 1989*. MIT Press, 2018, pp. 37-45.

Kee, Joan. "The World in Plain View: Form in the Service of the Global." In *Contemporary Art: 1989 to the Present*, eds. S. Hudson and A. Dumbadze. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, pp. 95-104.

Partha Mitter, "Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery", *The Art Bulletin*, no.90.4 (2008): 531-548.

Tiampo, Ming. "Cultural Mercantilism: Modernism's Means of Production." In *Globalization and Contemporary Art*, ed. Jonathan Harris. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2011, pp. 212-225.

"A Questionnaire on Global Methods." *October*, no. 180 (Spring 2022): 3–80.

### **Week 2 Abstraction**

This session explores abstraction as a crucial movement in modern art that has profoundly influenced contemporary art practices and critical discourse. By engaging abstraction, it discusses the concepts of global modernism, tradition, and decolonisation.

#### **Required**

Craven, David. "Abstract Expressionism and Third World Art: A Post-Colonial Approach to 'American' Art." *Oxford Art Journal* 14, no. 1 (1991): 44–66.

Clark, David. "Abstraction and Modern Chinese Art", *Chinese Art and Its Encounter with the World: Negotiating Alterity in Art and Its Historical Interpretation*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011, pp.133-164.

Greenberg, Clement. "Modernist Painting (1961)." In *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, eds. F. Francina, C. Harrison, D. Paul. Sage Publications, 1982, pp. 5-10.

### **Week 3 Socialist Modernism**

This session examines the socialist aesthetic, which has had a profound impact on Chinese contemporary art from the Mao era to the present day. It analyses case studies through the lens of socialist globalism, and questions the Euromerican-centric definition of contemporary art.

#### **Required**

Li, Vivian. "Introduction: Making Room for Misfits." *Art History*, vol. 45, no. 5(2022): 934–51.

Tan, Chang. 2012. "Art for/of the Masses." *Third Text* 26 (2): 177–94.

Sorace, Christian. "China's Last Communist: Ai Weiwei", *Critical Inquiry* 40 (2014): 396-419.

#### **Recommended**

Special Issue, *Art History*, vol. 45.5 (2023).

### **Week 4 Pop art and Politics**

Pop Art is a critical reflection on social and political conditions. This session uses Cynical Realism and Political Pop as case studies, examining how Pop Art was adopted by Chinese artists as an artistic strategy to engage with everyday visual idioms, mass media, and social criticism in the socioeconomic context of the reform period in contemporary China.

#### **Required**

Dal Lago, Francesca. "Personal Mao: Reshaping an Icon in Contemporary Chinese Art." *Art Journal* 58, no. 2 (1999): 46-59.

Hou Hanru. "Towards an 'un'-unofficial art: De-ideologicalisation of Chinese contemporary art in the 1990s." *Third Text* 34 (1996): 37–53.

Koppel-Yang, Martina. "75% Red, 20% Black and 5% White: Pop Aesthetics in Post-Revolutionary China." in *Pop Art and Vernacular Cultures*, ed. Kobena Mercer. MIT Press, 2007, pp.198-218.

### **Week 5 Performance Art**

Performance art has been vital to avant-garde practices in China in the 20th and 21st centuries. Regarded as radical expressions, performance art has been suppressed by Chinese official art institutions. This session examines how artists use performance and public interventions to explore critical issues.

#### **Required**

Hillenbrand, Margaret. "1. The Delegators". *On the Edge: Feeling Precarious in China*, New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2023, pp. 54-93

Phelan, Peggy. "The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction." In *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. Routledge, 1993, pp. 146-66

Park, J. P. "The Artist Was Present: Documentation, Reconstruction, and Interpretation of Performance Art in China." *Third Text*, vol. 30, no. 1–2 (2016): 100–16.

Zhijian, Qian. "Performing Bodies: Zhang Huan, Ma Liuming, and Performance Art in China." *Art Journal* 58. 2 (1999.): 60–81.

## **Week 6 Conceptual Art**

Conceptual art was a seminal movement in the twentieth century. Chinese artists have embraced and developed the practice since the 1980s. While conceptual art has faced challenges and constraints in contemporary China, it has been well received globally. This session explores the challenges and debates surrounding conceptual art in the socio-cultural context of contemporary China.

### **Required**

Buchloch, Benjamin H. D. "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions." *October* 52 (1990): 105-143.

DeDuve, Thierry. "When Form Has Become Attitude and Beyond." In *Theory in Contemporary Art since 1985*, ed. Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung. John Wiley & Sons, 2013, pp. 21-33.

Kang, Jiaqi. "Art as Surgery: Hygiene Politics in Zhang Peili's Glove Art, 1985-91." *Art Journal* 83. 1 (2024): 38-57.

Wang, Peggy. "Making and remaking history: Categorising 'conceptual art' in contemporary Chinese art." *Journal of Art Historiography* (10) (Jun 2014): 1-17.

## **Week 7 Fieldtrip to Asia Art Archive (TBC)**

## **Week 8 Social Engaged Art**

This session examines the rise of the "social turn" in global art scenes, focusing on how artistic practices function as a form of social critique and engagement and as a means to empower the public.

### **Required**

Bishop, Claire. "The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents." *Artforum* (2006): 178-83.

Wang, Nanming, "Art Criticism, Exhibition, and Citizen Politics", *Socially Engaged Art in Contemporary China*. Londong: Routledge, 2019, pp. 21-52.

Zheng, Bo. "Nearby Facts to Trouble the Emperor: A Note from China." *Globe Activism: Art and Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. MIT Press, 2015, 325-31.

## **Week 9 Museums**

Museums consecrate artists and artworks and play a pivotal role in canonisation. This session critically examines the correlation between museums and contemporary art, as well as the power dynamics between museums and artists.

### **Required**

Araeen, Rasheed. "The Art of Benevolent Racism." *Third Text* 14, no. 51 (Summer 2000): 57-64.

Harris, Jonathan. "Gatekeepers, Poachers and Pests in the Globalized Contemporary Art World System." *Third Text* 27. 4 (2013): 536-48.

Koon, Yeewan. "Where Are We Now? M+ and the Uncertain Future of Hong Kong." *October*, no. 180 (Spring 2022): 150-64.

Kharchenkova, Svetlana, and Lisa-Marie Merkus. "Who Is on Show? Globalization of Private Contemporary Art Museums in China." *Cultural sociology* (2024) <https://doi.org/10.1177/17499755241246030>

## **Week 10 Museum Visit (M+ Museum, TBC)**

### **Week 11 Exhibitions**

This session examines exhibitions as texts that provide narratives to frame contemporary art. Significant exhibitions, such as *Inside Out*, will be used as case studies to closely analyse the curatorial frameworks, and the list of artists and artworks included and organised in these exhibitions.

#### **Required**

Ramirez, Mari-Carmen. "Brokering Identities: Art Curators and the Politics of Cultural Representation." In *Thinking about Exhibitions*, ed. Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne. Routledge, 1996, pp. 15-26.

Kapur, Geeta. "Curating in Heterogeneous Worlds." In *Contemporary Art: 1989-Present*, ed. S. Hudson and A. Dumbadze. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, pp. 178-91.

Greenberg, Reesa. "Identity Exhibitions: From Magiciens De La Terre to Documenta II." *Art Journal* 64, no. 1 (2005): 90-94.

### **Week 12 Markets**

Chinese contemporary art has gained global market recognition since the early 21st century. This session examines contemporary art from a reception perspective, investigating how art market logic and dynamics shape and affect the development of Chinese contemporary art.

#### **Required**

Wang, Shuchen. "Foreign (In)Direct Investment in Chinese Contemporary Art Game: The Case Studies of Uli Sigg, Guy Ullens and beyond, 1989-2013." *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 51. 5 (2021): 291–306.

Mersmann, Birgit. "Global Dawning: The Gwangju Biennial Factor in the Making and Marketing of Contemporary Asian Art." *Third Text* 27. 4 (2013): 525–35.

Kharchenkova, Svetlana, and Olav Velthuis. "An Evaluative Biography of Cynical Realism and Political Pop." *Moments of Valuation*, Oxford University Press, 2015. Wed.

Kee, Joan. 2018. "The Property of Contemporary Chinese Art\*." *Law and Humanities* 12 (2): 251–77.

## **Week 13 Student Presentations and Wrap up**

## **Assessment Tasks**

### **Participation (10%)**

Identify and discuss the key arguments from the required readings. Participate actively in in-class discussions.

### **Group Presentation (20%)**

Students will form groups and work on a curatorial project on Chinese contemporary art. The project should engage with crucial concepts and debates pertinent to Chinese contemporary art. Each group needs to choose 15 artworks from the collections of Hong Kong Museum of Art and M+ museum, and provide a curatorial theme for the exhibition. The presentation should last 30 minutes, followed by a Q&A session.

### **Group Projects (30%)**

Based on the presentation, student groups are required to develop and create a virtual exhibition on Chinese contemporary art to showcase the main ideas and narrative of the exhibition. The exhibition should include a curatorial statement, sectional texts, and exhibit labels.

### **Essay (40%)**

Students are required to write an essay on Chinese contemporary art. The essay should demonstrate your ability to develop an argument, familiarity with primary and secondary sources, theories, terminologies, and methodologies. In-depth analysis of well-chosen examples and original ideas should be presented. The word length should not exceed 3,000 words. Provide images of the artworks with full and appropriate captions.

\*Students can use some AI tools to support their research and assignments with explicit acknowledgement. You should not rely solely on AI but should demonstrate your original ideas and critical thinking throughout your assignments.

## **Suggested Readings:**

Andrews, Julia. *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979*.

Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

Andrews, Julia. *A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-century China*. New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1998.

Archer, Anita. *Chinese Contemporary Art in the Global Auction Market*. Leiden ; Brill, 2022.

Bishop, Claire. *Installation Art : A Critical History*. London: Tate Pub., 2005.

Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells : Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. 1st [edition]. Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books, 2012.

Cottington, David. *Modern Art: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

Clunas, Craig. *Art in China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Cui, Shuqin. *Gendered Bodies : Toward a Women's Visual Art in Contemporary China*. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016.

DeBevoise, Jane. *Between State and Market : Chinese Contemporary Art in the Post-Mao Era*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

- Denton, Kirk. *Exhibiting the Past: Historical Memory and the Politics of Museums in Postsocialist China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014).
- Dumbadze, Alexander B., and Suzanne P. Hudson, eds. *Contemporary Art: 1989 to the Present*. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.
- Feng, Boyi. *Stepping out!: Female Identities in Chinese Contemporary Art*. Berlin, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag GmbH, 2022.
- Feng, Boyi, Zhijie Qiu, and Jie Lu. *The Monk and the Demon : Contemporary Chinese Art*. Milan: 5 Continents, 2004.
- Foster, Hal, ed. *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2011.
- Gladston, Paul. *Deconstructing Contemporary Chinese Art : Selected Critical Writings and Conversations, 2007-2014*. 1st ed. 2016. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2016.
- Gao, Minglu, and Norman Bryson. *Inside out : New Chinese Art*. San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1998.
- Jones, Amelia, ed. *A Companion to Contemporary Art since 1945*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2006.
- King, Richard eds. *Art in Turmoil: The Chinese Cultural Revolution, 1966-76*. Columbia: UBC press, 2010.
- Meyer, Richard. *What Was Contemporary Art?* MIT Press, 2013.
- Stallabrass, Julian. *Contemporary Art: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Smith, Terry. *What Is Contemporary Art?* University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Smith, Terry. *Contemporary Art: World Currents*. London: Laurence King, 2011.
- Sullivan, Michael. *Art and Artists of Twentieth-century China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Wang, Meiqin. *Urbanization and Contemporary Chinese Art*. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Wang, Peggy. *The Future History of Contemporary Chinese Art*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020.
- Wood, Paul, ed. *Art of the Twentieth Century: A Reader*. Yale University Press, 2003.
- Wu, Hung. *Contemporary Chinese Art : A History, 1970s-2000s*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2014.
- Wiseman, Mary Bittner, and Yuedi Liu. *Subversive Strategies in Contemporary Chinese Art*. Leiden: Brill, 2011.
- Welland, Sasha Su-Ling. *Experimental Beijing : Gender and Globalization in Chinese Contemporary Art*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.
- Wu Hung. *Contemporary Chinese Art: Primary Documents* (New York; Museum of Modern Art, 2010) Martina Koppel Yang, *Semiotic Warfare: The Chinese Avant-Garde, 1979-1989*. Hong Kong: timezone 8, 2003.

### **Online Sources:**

- Documenting Contemporary Chinese art by Asia Art Archive, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbdDVbaq3yjWOsw2F1zenQ>
- Hong Kong Museum of Art, Resource <https://hk.art.museum/en/web/ma/resources.html>
- The MoMA, *post: Notes on Modern and Contemporary Art Around the Globe*, <http://post.at.moma.org/>

The MoMA, *Learning* [http://www.moma.org/learn/moma\\_learning](http://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning)  
M+, *Resource* <https://www.mplus.org.hk/en/resources/>  
Tate, *Online Resources*, <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources>

## Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>.

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed **declaration** that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

- In the case of group projects, all members of the group should be asked to sign the declaration, each of whom is responsible and liable to disciplinary actions, irrespective of whether he/she has signed the declaration and whether he/she has contributed, directly or indirectly, to the problematic contents.
- For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment.
- Students are fully aware that their work may be investigated by AI content detection software to determine originality.
- Students are fully aware of the AI approach(es) adopted in the course. In the case where some AI tools are allowed, students have made proper acknowledgment and citations as suggested by the course teacher.

Assignments without a properly signed declaration will not be graded by teachers.

Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

The submission of a piece of work, or a part of a piece of work, for more than one purpose (e.g. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration to this effect shall be regarded as having committed undeclared multiple submissions. It is common and acceptable to reuse a turn of phrase or a sentence or two from one's own work; but wholesale reuse is problematic. In any case, agreement from the course teacher(s) concerned should be obtained prior to the submission of the piece of work.

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### Grade Descriptors

Grade	Overall course
A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
A-	Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
B	Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.
C	Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
D	Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes
F	Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.