

# The Reception of Chinese Art Across Cultures



# The Reception of Chinese Art Across Cultures

Edited by

Michelle Ying-ling Huang

**CAMBRIDGE**  
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**P U B L I S H I N G**

The Reception of Chinese Art Across Cultures,  
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*In Grateful Memory of Professor Michael Sullivan (1916-2013)*



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summer of 2013, he discussed the book project with me and offered valuable advice on selected papers. On 5 August, he graciously showed me the draft of his Foreword in his dining room. Our last discussion on his revised Foreword was communicated by email on 15 September, two weeks before his sudden death in Oxford. Although Professor Sullivan's Foreword for this book is now amongst his papers which are yet to be organised and archived by staff members at the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, I gratefully acknowledge my deepest debt to Professor Sullivan for his huge support, his useful advice and perceptive inputs. He has an honoured position in this volume, spiritually guiding both contributors and readers to open up discussions of the reception of Chinese art in different countries; hence, this book is dedicated to his memory.

# INTRODUCTION

## MICHELLE YING-LING HUANG

The diffusion, exchange and integration of different cultures are consequences of globalisation that many people experience through the ages. Since the Han dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) cultural and artistic interactions between China and the outside world, developed through religious exchanges, foreign trade, diplomatic missions and other means along the Silk Road and via sea trade routes, encouraged the transmission of materials, ideas, skills and works of Chinese art from China to Korea, Japan, Europe and other countries.<sup>1</sup> In recent decades, the development and impact of cross-cultural interactions on collecting, curatorial and creative practices has been a topical subject for contemporary scholars, as evidenced in Stacey Pierson's *Collecting Chinese Art: Interpretation and Display* (2000), Vimalin Rujivacharakul's *Collecting China: The World, China, and a History of Collecting* (2011), as well as Jason Steuber's and Lai Guolong's *Collectors, Collections, and Collecting the Arts of China: Histories and Challenges* (2014). These well-documented edited works provide historical narratives and compelling ideas on the collectors, dealers, curators and scholars who contributed to amass collections of Chinese art and artefacts in a global context. While the approaches to the collecting, display and making of Chinese art suggest tastes, identities, status and cultural politics, the framing and interpretation of Chinese art by institutions and individuals in different countries shape the public understanding and appreciation of the subject.

*The Reception of Chinese Art Across Cultures* is a collection of essays demonstrating a focused study of the ways in which Chinese art was circulated, collected, exhibited and perceived in Japan, Europe and America from the fourteenth to the twenty-first century. Chapters 3, 5 and 8 in this volume are derived from a panel session on "China and the West: The Reception of Chinese Art Across Cultures from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century" in the 36th Association of Art Historians (AAH) Annual Conference held at the University of Glasgow on 15-17 April

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<sup>1</sup> For the early cultural encounters between China and the outside world, see, for example, Watt et al. 2004; Rastelli 2008, 23-45 and 53-9; Sullivan 1989.

2010. Based on substantial archival materials, interviews and other scholarly references, scholars and curators from East Asia, Europe and North America jointly present cutting-edge research on cross-cultural issues in Chinese art with new perspectives and critical analyses. The discussions embrace a broad sense of art receptivity to include foreign attitudes to and perception and judgment of the visual arts and material culture of China, as well as their creative practices and aesthetic representations. They encompass the diverse media of painting, photography, garden design and material culture, while espousing a multiplicity of aesthetic, philosophical, socio-cultural, economic and political perspectives. Stimulating examples within this volume emphasise the Western understanding of Chinese pictorial art, while addressing issues concerning the consumption of Chinese art and Chinese-inspired artistic productions from early times to the contemporary period; the adaption of foreign stimuli in creative practices; the roles of collector, curator, museum and auction house in shaping the taste, meaning and conception of art; the cultural-political agenda of collaborative exhibitions; and the art and cultural identity of the Chinese diaspora in a global context.

This introduction articulates the intertwined relationship between chapters, which are arranged in a chronological and thematic order and divided into four parts:

## **Blending Chinese and Foreign Cultures**

In the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD), international trade and religious activities stimulated Japan's appreciation of Chinese art, and this continued to grow in subsequent periods.<sup>2</sup> According to Nishida Hiroko 西田宏子 (2000), a large number of Chinese cultural materials, including the Song (960-1279 AD) and Yuan (1271-1368 AD) ceramics like celadon and *qingbai* ware 青白瓷, were imported to Japan and used in the ceremonies, interior decoration and tea drinking events of Zen temples and the military class in the late Kamakura period (1185-1392 AD). Historical records reveal that it was fashionable to use Chinese decorative art objects

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<sup>2</sup> In Tang China, the growing importance of international trade and Buddhism resulted in the foreign presence of large numbers of merchants, students, emissaries and pilgrims, some of whom were Japanese in search of education and sacred objects at great monasteries and famous Chinese sites. They acquired Buddhist statues and copies of scriptures to take back to Japan. See Lewis 2009, 153-78.

in Kyoto 京都, Kamakura 鎌倉市 and the Kantō 関東 region, and other places in Japan. Japanese artists and collectors also became involved with imported Chinese paintings and calligraphy, especially those produced in the fourteenth century. Fine specimens of early Chinese paintings can now be found in the Tokyo National Museum, Kyoto National Museum, and the Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts. Selected works are recently on loan to exhibitions in the West, including *Masterpieces of Chinese Painting, 700-1900*, held at the Victoria and Albert Museum from 26 October 2013 to 19 January 2014, and *Chinese Paintings from Japanese Collections* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art from 11 May to 6 July 2014. These shows allow international audiences to gain a glimpse of China's artistic heritage, in which early ink paintings were models for Japanese painters from the early fourteenth to the early twentieth century.

In the exhibition catalogue of *Masterpieces of Chinese Painting, 700-1900* (2013), Itakura Masaaki 板倉聖哲 illuminates a collecting history of early Chinese art in Japan and its impact on local artistic practices from the Nara (710-94 AD) to the Edo period (1603-1868 AD). He suggests that collections of Chinese art for members of the Japanese ruling elite were “assemblages of prestige goods” and functioned as “symbols of power and authority” (Itakura 2013, 87). Highly esteemed works in Japanese collections of the aristocracy, the shogunate and Buddhist temples included early tracing copies of calligraphy by Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303-65) and his son Wang Xianzhi 王獻之 (344-86) of the Eastern Jin dynasty (317-420 AD), ink paintings by Ma Yuan 馬遠 (act. 1190-1224) and Muqi Fachang 牧谿法常 (J: Mokkei) (act. mid- to late 13th century) of the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279 AD), and other paintings by artists of the Zhe school 浙派 in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 AD). In view of the political, religious and cultural environments of Japan from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, the present volume begins with an exploration of the Japanese conception of the art of Muqi, a Chan 禪 monk-painter. Aaron Rio explains how Song and Yuan Chinese paintings were circulated, collected and perceived in medieval Japan. The paintings attributed to and inspired by Muqi in the vast shogunal collection and Zen temples in the greater Kantō region of eastern Japan are apt examples, demonstrating the Japanese admiration of Muqi's pictorial motifs and styles in the Muromachi period (1336-1573 AD).

At the time, economic and religious interactions among the Japanese and Chinese in Hakata 博多 and Ningbo 寧波 contributed to a growing interest in collecting Chinese art in Japan, in which Zen priests played an important role in transferring Muqi's works to the shogunal collection.

The increased cross-regional contacts between Japanese collectors and painters in Kyoto and Kamakura also encouraged an engagement with Southern Song paintings, particularly the styles of Xia Gui 夏珪 (act. 1180-ca. 1230) and Muqi, as embodied in several Kantō landscape and religious paintings from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup> In his chapter, Rio illuminates how painters in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Kamakura relied solely on local collections of Chinese painting amassed in the thirteenth century, many of which were by or believed to be by Muqi, thus a local style of ink painting can in many ways be called a version of the “Muqi style”. He argues that the “local Muqi style” remained viable in the sixteenth century, when painters in the Kantō region were forced to navigate a “compartmentalising approach” to painting style introduced from Kyoto. This new approach brought the notion of Muqi- and Xia Gui-derived styles, among others, to Kantō and saw painters in the region relied on a shared “hypothetical model”. At the time, painters were inclined to choose a style suitable for a given pictorial subject: for example, the older, “local Muqi style” for Kannon 觀音 (S: Avalokiteśvara; C: Guanyin 觀音) and doves; the new sixteenth-century “Muqi style” for eggplants, melons and monkeys; and the “Xia Gui style” for landscapes. It is this very multiplicity of styles, both “old” and “new”, “local” and “imported”, “Muqi” and “Xia Gui”, characterising the defining feature of Kantō ink painting. Rio’s analysis clearly reveals Japanese collectors’ and painters’ admiration for and their early engagements with fashionable styles of paintings by Muqi and other Southern Song painters.

The fusion of local and foreign artistic traditions is the result of international economy and cultural activities. Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, the East India Company’s monopoly of maritime trade between China and Europe prompted the wide circulation of Chinese products, including artworks, in the global marketplace. Different cultures connect most often in the context of trade, religion and war, thus instigating the effect of cultural hybridity.<sup>4</sup> For instance, the European Jesuit missionaries Matteo Ricci (a.k.a. Li Madou 利馬竇, 1552-1610) and Giuseppe Castiglione (a.k.a. Lang Shining 郎世寧, 1688-1766) contributed

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<sup>3</sup> The Japanese taste in Southern Song painting was later adopted by collectors, curators and artists in early twentieth-century Britain and America, thus partly shaping the Western conception of Chinese painting. See Michelle Huang’s chapter in this volume.

<sup>4</sup> On theories of hybridity and the effects of hybridisation upon identity, culture and the authority of power, see Bhabha 1994, 112-20; Burke 2009; Leuthold 2011, 10-26.

to introduce Western art, science and technology to scholars, painters and astronomers in Ming and Qing (1644-1911 AD) China. The integration of Chinese and Western painting principles, perspectives and technical methods not only revealed in the court art, but also widely applied to the making of Chinese export art. When the process of hybridisation took place in international economic processes, the demand for Chinese export art not only sustained the fabrication of new aesthetic forms out of the confluence of two or more cultural currents, but also established dialogues between Chinese makers and overseas clientele. The early travelogues by Western artists, collectors and art critics and their commentaries on Cantonese artists' skills in copying from or modelling on European paintings, prints, photographs and other kinds of art also reveal the Occidental conception of "beauty", artistic skills and their value judgment of Chinese art.

Maria Mok examines Chinese export painting as a hybrid form of artistic product enthusiastically acquired by Westerners during the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. In her analysis, she addresses issues of art training and art market by comparing the styles of celebrated painters from China and Europe, including Spolium 史貝霖 (act. 1770-1805), Lamqua 唸呱 (1801/1802-?), Tingqua 庭呱 (act. 1840s-70s), George Chinnery (1774-1852) and Auguste Borget (1808-77). In the confined area of foreign factories in Canton (Guangzhou 廣州), where heterogeneous forms of cultural practice emerged, Cantonese artists intentionally blended local and foreign artistic traditions by applying pleasing colour, exotic subject matter and minute detail in order to cater to the taste of Western clientele.

Chinese artists' adaptation of local artistic tradition and their adoption of Western painting principles were similar to the motivation of European craftsmen in producing *Chinoiserie* objects. Dawn Jacobson (1993, 27) suggests that *Chinoiserie* is "western" and "a purely European vision of China; a fantasy based on a China of the imagination, the fabulous Cathay invented by the medieval world." Interestingly, the imagined Chinese style had been incorporated into Western homes in the mid-eighteenth century. For instance, the English cabinetmaker Thomas Chippendale (1718-79) blended the Gothic and Chinese styles into exotic furniture known as "Chinese Chippendale", using imaginative Chinese ornamentation such as pagoda cresting, pierced frets and lattice work.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The design of Chinese ornamentation was illustrated in pattern-design books such as Thomas Chippendale's *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* (1754)

In view of the exotic material and motifs prevalent in Western interiors, Clare Taylor examines European attitudes toward Chinese wallpapers in the eighteenth century and relates the developed taste to the *Chinoiserie* revival in the early twentieth century. She sets out the historical background of the supply and consumption of Chinese papers in Britain through a comparative study of interior decorations of three country houses, namely Berkeley House, Kelmarsh Hall and Hampden House. Taylor describes the materials, production methods and artistic qualities of Chinese wallpapers in different settings, while giving a detailed analysis of British *Chinoiserie* interiors. She further investigates the roles, functions and cultural meanings of Chinese papers, while examining the special elements of Chinese designs which appealed to European eyes. The case studies of Chinese-style interiors clearly reveal the Western representation of Chinese art and design. Chinese wallpaper associations with the exotic, luxury, aristocratic consumption, effeminacy, and female desire were interpreted and visualised in 1920s British homes.<sup>6</sup>

Instead of imitating the motifs and styles of Chinese painting and *Chinoiserie* objects, Zdeněk Sklenář (1910-86), was among the contemporary European artists, transformed his study of Chinese art and culture into abstract visual images of ancient Chinese characters, seal scripts and philosophical ideas. Unlike many Chinese and Western artists who had never gained first-hand experience outside their own countries during their lifetime, Sklenář's cultural visit in Peking (Beijing 北京) in the spring of 1955 and his study of Chinese literature and culture were crucial factors affecting his perception of Chinese art and Daoism. As well as his direct contacts with Chinese scholars and artists, Lucie Olivová argues that Sklenář's memories and sketches of Chinese landscape art, historic sites and lifestyle were important sources of inspiration for his oil paintings, book designs and illustrations produced after his China trip. Sklenář's employment of Chinese calligraphic symbols reveals the Czech fascination of linear qualities, rhythmic spirits and mysterious symbols of Chinese characters in the second half of the twentieth century. The visual adaptation of "Chinese" motifs and philosophical ideas in Sklenář's abstract paintings and book designs shows his artistic and conceptual response to early Chinese art, thought and culture.

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and Sir William Chambers's (1723-96) *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, etc.* (1757). See Jacobson 1993, 123-42.

<sup>6</sup>On the meanings of Chinese material culture in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries British domestic interiors and their intersection with various social-cultural and political issues of colonialism, identity, class, gender, collecting and display, see Cheang 2008.

## Envisioning Chinese Landscape Art

Chinese thought, characters and pictorial art had been fascinations for Western modernists in the first half of the twentieth century. As with Sklenář's study of *Daodejing* 道德經, British modernists were also inspired by Laozi's 老子 teaching and found associated thought-provoking ideas in Song landscape painting. I discern that Laurence Binyon (1869-1943) played an important role as cultural mediator, whose ideas of Chinese art and thought owed much to the writings of Japanese scholars, such as Okakura Kakuzo 岡倉覺三 (a.k.a. Okakura Tenshin 岡倉天心, 1862-1913) and Taki Seiichi 瀧精一 (1873-1945), and later disseminated to audiences in the East and West through lectures, publications and curatorial works. While investigating the provenance of Song landscape paintings in British and American museums by the 1910s, I argue that the lack of genuine works in museum collections and the problems of authenticity and attribution misled Western audiences' understanding of the subject.

Although Binyon was confused by the attributions and styles of Chinese landscape paintings of the Song and Ming dynasties, his interpretation of Asian painting was authoritative for his contemporaries, including the young English artist Paul Nash (1889-1946). Both Binyon and Nash admired the imagination and poetic expression of Song painters, as well as the aesthetic and philosophical ideas of their landscape paintings, which revealed human comprehension of cosmic life, the love of nature and the liberation of artistic freedom. The intellectual characters, romantic feeling and the use of empty space in the work of the Ma-Xia School not only appealed to the eyes of collectors and painters in medieval Japan, but also inspired Nash's mystic landscape paintings, which revealed a brooding vision, a sensitive imagination and a deep appreciation of nature.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Nash's knowledge of Chinese painting was enhanced by the specimens displayed in exhibitions and reproduced in catalogues, including the volume of the A. W. Bahr collection edited by the Helsinki-born and Stockholm-based scholar Osvald Sirén (1879-1966), who gained more first-hand experiences of documenting art in East Asia than Binyon, with four voyages made between 1918 and 1935.<sup>7</sup> From the mid-1920s onwards, Sirén illuminated the historical narratives of Chinese art in comprehensive publications, including the four-volume *Chinese Sculpture from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Century* (1925) and the seven-

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<sup>7</sup> Binyon took his only visit to China during his Far Eastern trip between August 1929 and January 1930. See Michelle Huang 2011.

volume *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles* (1956-8). Paralleling the design of Siren's house on Lidingo with his knowledge of Chinese and Japanese gardens as well as his love for eighteenth-century Rococo art, Minna Törmä's research sheds new light on the *Chinoiserie* revival and the Chinese influence on European garden design in the second quarter of the twentieth century. Like Sklenář, Siren's personal experience in East Asia and his knowledge of Asian art affected his taste and his way of constructing hybrid architectural sites in Europe. While examining Siren's motivations behind his two books on Chinese and European gardens published in 1949-50, Törmä considers the discourse of memory and nostalgia in her review of Siren's photographic documentation of China trips. This encourages a reflection upon the relationship between man and nature, between text and image, between garden art, painting and poetry, as well as the relevance of Chinese thought and aesthetics for modern European garden art.

Shifting to the representation of European landscapes through Chinese eyes, Mark Haywood explores the experience, memory and cultural identity of the Chinese diaspora in Britain by looking into Chiang Yee's 蔣彝 (1903-77) travel writing in the mid-1930s and Weng Fen's 翁奮 (a.k.a. Weng Peijun 翁培竣, b. 1961) photographs in the mid-2000s. During his stay in London in 1933-40, Chiang Yee became involved in Laurence Binyon's circle of friends, including the avid collector of Chinese art George Eumorfopoulos (1863-1939). Chiang Yee was a prolific writer and established his fame in Chinese painting and calligraphy through exhibitions and publications, including *The Chinese Eyes: An Interpretation of Chinese Painting* (1935), *Chinese Calligraphy* (1938), and a series of the travel writing, *The Silent Traveller* (1937-72). On the one hand, he attempted to correct the misconception of Chinese civilisation, art and culture presented by Western scholars during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; on the other hand, he introduced new angles of Chinese painting, such as inscriptions and common elements in painting and literature. Zheng Da 鄭達 (2010, xxi) affirms that Chiang Yee's artwork and writings "facilitated a shift for Westerners to the 'Oriental Standpoint' and promoted a better understanding between the East and the West."

Following the footsteps of the pioneering cultural interpreter who brought Chinese views to the British public in the 1930s, Weng Fen visited the English Lake District seventy years after Chiang Yee. Haywood investigates Western audiences' attitudes toward Chinese artists and Chinese art over time by introducing an innovative project of contemporary photography, *Return of the Silent Traveller*, carried out in

2005. Shifting from contemplation of timeless Nature to the reflection upon social and economic changes of a place, Weng Fen's innovative approach offered more complex readings on the familiar British landscape for English art audiences. Unlike Chiang Yee who translated his memories of the Lake District into painting, poetry and prose, Weng employed elements of cinematic production in still-photography in order to suggest the Chinese gaze and feelings of otherness and alienation in the idealised English landscape. The artistic career and sentiment of the Chinese diaspora and the public response to contemporary Chinese art will be further discussed in subsequent chapters by Diana Yeh and Silvia Fok.

### **Conceptualising Chinese Art through Display**

Aside from artistic production, art writings and photographic documentation, the display practice of museums suggests the thinking and authority of collectors and curators in interpreting Chinese art. Lenore Metrick-Chen examines the ways in which Chinese objects were perceived, collected and exhibited in American museums by contextualising the issue within the political, economic and social history of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when *Japonisme* was still in fashion. Nathan Dunn (1782-1844) and John R. Peters (dates unknown) demonstrated the efforts of collectors in persuading a more appreciative attitude towards the Chinese people and their art. Metrick-Chen extends her discussion to the aesthetic judgment in the West, offering a new perspective into the evaluation of the function and value of Asian objects under John Ruskin's (1819-1900) paradigm of art and the predominance of Aestheticism. She also points out America's excitement over American design and Japanese objects, but they lacked acknowledgement of Chinese objects and expressed prejudice towards Chinese artistic inability in adopting Western painting techniques such as modelling and perspective. Metrick-Chen discerns that American prejudice towards Chinese art was related to the social issue of the exclusion of Chinese people, which was due to the increasing number of Chinese immigration to the United States in the late nineteenth century. It was not until the 1900s that the formal qualities and aesthetic values of traditional Chinese art were generally admired in America and Europe, thus Chinese objects regained their importance in American museums and helped bring about a new artistic paradigm. A critical study of Western interest in the pictorial, decorative and landscape art of China in the first half of the twentieth century is given by Taylor, Huang and Törmä in this book.

The choice of collectibles and exhibits reflects the taste of collectors

and curators, and that influences the public understanding of the subject. Following the establishment of the Palace Museum in the Forbidden City, Beijing on 10 October 1925 and the subsequent south migration of China's imperial treasures during the wars in the 1930s and 1940s, the glorious tradition and modern innovation of Chinese art were introduced to a wider audience through international exhibitions. Taking the perspective of art curation, Michaela Pejšochová and Noelle Giuffrida present a comprehensive study of large-scale exhibitions of Chinese art which toured in major cities in Europe and America in the 1930s and the 1960s.

Pejšochová examines the cultural-political agenda of the Chinese Government in touring exhibitions of modern Chinese painting in nine cities of five European countries throughout 1934 till early 1935. She argues that such exhibitions allowed the Chinese Government to showcase the tradition and recent development of Chinese pictorial art on a world stage, in order to regain its reputation lost through the political weakness of the late Qing regime and in competition with the Japanese. Pejšochová also investigates the selection, shipment and storage of artworks that suggested the competition among prominent modern Chinese artists from Shanghai 上海, Canton and other regions, as revealed in the antagonism between Liu Haisu 劉海粟 (1896-1994), Xu Beihong 徐悲鴻 (1895-1953) and Lin Fengmian 林風眠 (1900-91). Pejšochová affirms Liu's role as artistic ambassador in encouraging an appreciation of and the collecting of modern Chinese painting in European museums and galleries, in collaborating with overseas Chinese artists and ambassadors and European curators, and in enhancing the European understanding of Chinese painters in southeastern China. She also evaluates the cultural strategies of Chinese artists and their adapted curatorial practices on collaborative exhibitions and art activities in Berlin, London, Geneva, Prague and in other European countries. The publication, talks, publicity and media coverage of the tour exhibitions in different regions are also discussed.

The tour exhibitions of modern Chinese painting were the prelude to the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* held at the New Burlington Galleries, London from 28 November 1935 to 7 March 1936. Its cultural-political agenda have been extensively discussed by Western and Asian scholars (e.g. Ellen Huang 2011; Steuber 2006). In view of the significant impact of the 1935-6 *International Exhibition of Chinese Art*, Giuffrida reconstructs historical details of the 1961 *Chinese Art Treasures (CAT)* exhibition, which was first held at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, then travelled to other major cities in the United States. As with Pejšochová's approach, Giuffrida explores the motivation behind the exhibition plan, the timing and media coverage of the show, the selection

and presentation of Chinese paintings from a cultural and political point of view. While illuminating the relations between Taiwan, mainland China and America between the mid-1950s and early 1960s, she examines the political, diplomatic, cultural and artistic roles of *CAT* in expressing national and institutional pride. Giuffrida further investigates the impact of *CAT* on public and scholarly reception of Chinese painting in early 1960s America, in order to reveal the methods of connoisseurship and problems of attribution, dating, grading and authenticity at the time. The choice of Chinese paintings reflects the taste of leading curators and art historians in America, while the canonised group of works relate to the American preconception of Chinese painting before 1961.

### **Positioning Contemporary Chinese Artists in the Globe**

While curators and cultural ambassadors introduced works of early and modern Chinese art to Western audiences, contemporary Chinese artists also took initiatives in promoting their own art. In Diana Yeh's study of the artistic practice and transnational experience of Li Yuan-chia 李元佳 (1929-94), she takes a multicultural perspective in investigating the identity of the overseas Chinese artist, culturally specific works of art and the interpretation of modern Chinese art in Britain. Yeh points out the problems in the Eurocentric-American writing on Asian art history, while reaffirming Li Yuan-chia's contribution in promoting art appreciation and creative practice throughout his career.<sup>8</sup> Li's local engagements with modern art in Asian and European countries have been discussed in relation to the social and political environments of the twentieth century. It urges for a deeper reflection upon the translocal nature of Li's art and encourages further debates over the perception and visualisation of "Chineseness" in a globalised world. Li Yuan-chia's transnational background and his experimental art practice in different countries inform a hybrid form of abstract and conceptual art, which has received much attention in contemporary society. Li's participation in art exhibitions and his viewers' engagements with participatory and total environment art suggest a harmonious interaction between Chinese artists and the Western audience.

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<sup>8</sup> Li Yuan-chia's artistic career and creative breakthroughs have recently been revisited in *View-Point: A Retrospective Exhibition of Li Yuan-chia* held at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum from 8 March to 8 June 2014. The exhibition curators, Guy Brett and Nick Sawyer, delivered two talks on the artist in the Friday Night Salon at Tate Modern on 4 April 2014.

In comparison with the overseas experience and art training of Chinese male artists discussed by Haywood and Yeh, Silvia Fok offers an alternative view of the Chinese female artist Xing Danwen 邢丹文 (b. 1967) by looking into her training in Western art and photography and her experiences in Europe and the United States. She examines the ways in which contemporary Chinese photography is perceived and evaluated in different cultures at the turn of the twenty-first century. She also expounds how Xing Danwen's Western-inspired photography and her work with ethnic Chinese are received in Asia and the West. With Xing's diverse experiences of exhibiting and publishing in Hong Kong, Japan, Germany and other places, Fok explores from a gender dimension the Western and Asian audiences' responses to the culturally specific work by a female contemporary Chinese photographer.

The People's Republic of China has launched a series of modernisation campaigns since 1978, when Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平 (1904-97) introduced a new international trade policy of opening up the nation to the outside world, contributing to more foreign trade and cultural exchanges with other Asian and Western countries. From the 1990s onwards, the global spotlight has been shed on China's urban transformation, her rapid social and economic development, and her emerging role as a leading challenger to the United States global dominance. Following China's increasing economic power and international status, Chinese collectors, artists and works of art also occupy important places in auctions, art fairs and privileged international exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale and Documenta.<sup>9</sup> Wu Hung 巫鴻 describes (2010, 288-9) that starting from the early 1990s the globalisation of contemporary Chinese art was in full swing, while its process was coupled with the commercialisation of contemporary Chinese art. Lü Peng 呂澎 also states that at the time Chinese art was in the process of heading toward the market—"an artist's work can only be truly and effectively sustained when sales are made" (Quoted in *ibid.*, 290). He explains that society uses money to affirm the value of aesthetic qualities and hidden meanings of the spiritual creation of contemporary Chinese art.

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<sup>9</sup> For instance, Zeng Fanzhi's 曾梵志 (b. 1964) *The Last Supper* (2001), which is inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's (1452-1519) mural painting of the same title (ca. 1495-8), symbolises China's move toward capitalism during the economic reform in the 1990s. Zeng's *The Last Supper* sold for HK\$180.4 million (US\$23.3 million) at Sotheby's Hong Kong 40th Anniversary Evening Sale on 5 October 2013; its *exorbitant* auction price set record for Asian contemporary art. See Hunt 2013.

While academic views, exhibition records and news publicity are some of the factors affecting the value and price of an artwork, art critics play an increasingly important role in organising art fairs, establishing a financial operating system, formulating criteria for art evaluation, and in developing close networks with various sectors in the international art world.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, auction houses also play an influential role in framing the meaning of Chinese art and speculating on its value. Elizabeth Kim argues that major auction houses, like Sotheby's, manipulated the Chinese art market through rhetoric strategies and promotional tools. For instance, the works of some Chinese artists like Yue Minjun 岳敏君 (b. 1962) are strategically associated with Cynical Realism, Western Modernism and major political events in contemporary China. Kim also investigates the media's (mis-)interpretation of Yue Minjun's art under the influence of speculative irrationality in the art market. She urges for a reflection upon the future development and education of contemporary Chinese art in Asia and the West, and the roles and ethics of art practitioners and marketers. Kim's discussion also poses questions of the sustainability of contemporary artists' international reputation, and the artists' responses to the irrationality of the art market and the marketing strategies adopted to promote their works.

In recent years, public museums are being built at a rate of more than a hundred a year, causing museum-building booms in not only Beijing and Shanghai, but also in the second- and third-tier cities. The Chinese Government aims to have 3,500 state-owned museums built in China by 2015.<sup>11</sup> On the one hand, visiting museums reveal a pursuit of quality of life satisfying a growing public demand for art and culture; on the other hand, new and ambitious public museums have become propaganda vehicles in China, an integral part of the cultural policy. A struggle of power and authority between governments, museums, collectors, curators, auction houses, art critics, and other stakeholders in the global art system will emerge and have an impact on worldwide audiences' understanding, appreciation and judgment of Chinese art. The chapters to follow will reveal the diverse views of individual contributors and hope to arouse new voices from readers who have encountered the objects, practices, people

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<sup>10</sup> See Lü Peng, "Reflections and Questions Raised after the First 1990s Biennial Art Fair (1993)", in Wu 2010, 303-57.

<sup>11</sup> Although China is very good at building hardware, the new museums generally contain lacklustre collections and lack the expertise of curators, conservators, educators and other support for academic research. See "Mad about Museums" 2013; Gardner 2013.