

26-28 JUNE 2014
THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

#### **CONTENTS**

Pages 2-3 Schedule

Pages 4-13 Paper Abstracts

#### **PARTICIPANTS**

Julia Andrews Ohio State University

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Huang Xuelei University of Edinburgh Richard King University of Victoria

Kevin McLoughlin National Museum of Scotland

Paul Pickowicz University of California, San Diego

Yang Chia-ling University of Edinburgh

Yang Peiming Shanghai Propaganda Art Center

Zheng Ji University of Edinburgh



Friday 27th June 2014			
09.30-11.15	Session 1 – Welcome and Keynote Speeches		
09.30-09.45	Welcome address		
	Chris Breward, Principal, Edinburgh College of Art		
	Introduction, Natascha Gentz		
09.45-10.30	Chen Ruilin, Tsinghua University		
	百年变迁: 从商业月份牌画到政治宣传画		
10.30-11.15	Yang Peiming, Shanghai Propaganda Poster Art Museum		
	Ha Qiongwen, the Master Chinese Propaganda Poster Artist		
11.15-11.30	Tea/ Coffee		
11.30-13.00	Session 2 - Chair: Paul Pickowicz		
11.30-12.15	Joachim Gentz, University of Edinburgh		
	Ambiguity of Religious Signs and Claim to Power in Chinese Propaganda Posters		
12.15-13.00	Christoph Harbsmeier, University of Oslo		
	The Cartoonist Feng Zikai (1898 - 1975)		
14.00-13.45	Lunch		
15.00-16.30	Session 3 - Chair: Richard King		
15.00-15.45	Huang Xuelei, University of Edinburgh		
	Politics of the Leg: Visual Representations of Female Legs and Propaganda Culture in		
	China, 1930s—1970s		
15.45-16.30	Zheng Ji, University of Edinburgh		
	Model Citizens of Modern China: Visual Representations of Film Stars in the 1930s		
16.30 -16.45	Tea/ Coffee		
16.45-17.30	Session 4 - Chair: Katharine Burnett		
16.45-17.30	Yang Chia-ling, University of Edinburgh		
	Historicising Visions in Shanghai Posters		



Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> June 2014			
10.00-11.30	Session 5 - Chair: Christoph Harbsmeier		
10.00-10.45	Julia Andrews, Ohio State University		
	Reconstructing Lu Xun: The Cultural Revolution Poster as Woodcut		
10.45-11.30	Katharine Burnett, University of California, Davies		
	"Sweet Dreams are Made of This. Who Am I to Disagree?": Pictorial Textiles		
	of the Cultural Revolution		
11.30-11.45	Tea/ Coffee		
11.45-13.15	Session 6 - Chair: Yang Chia-ling		
11.45-12.30	Paul Pickowicz, University of California, San Diego		
	Cultural Revolution Posters: Intended and Unintended Messages		
12.30-13.15	Natascha Gentz, University of Edinburgh		
	Representing, Constructing or Reinventing Jiang Qing		
13.15-14.00	Lunch		
14.00-15.15	Session 7 - Chair: Julia Andrews		
14.00-14.45	Richard King, University of Victoria		
	The Microphone and the Pen: Delivering the Message in the 1976 Yangquan		
	Counter-Attack Poster		
14.45-15.15	Plenary Discussion: Posters of Republican China and the PRC -		
	Ruptures and Continuities		
15.15-15.30	Tea/ Coffee		
15.30-16.15	Session 8 - Chair: Joachim Gentz		
15.30-16.15	Denise Ho, Chinese University of Hong Kong		
	Posters, Exhibitions, and Museums as Pedagogy		
16.15-17.00	Kevin McLoughlin, National Museum of Scotland		
	A Newly Acquired Collection of Chinese Propaganda Posters at the		
	National Museum of Scotland		
17.00-17.30	Closing discussion – future projects		



#### PAPER ABSTRACTS

#### Chen Ruilin

A Hundred years of Chinese poster art: from commercial calendars to propaganda posters

#### **Abstract**

As distinctive signs of visual culture in modern China, commercial calendars and propaganda posters are pregnant with abundant historical memories. Shanghai commercial calendars of the first half of the 20th century embody the cultural hybridity between China and the foreign, the past and present in the colonial period of this oriental metropolis. Commercial posters greatly influence Chinese ideas of modernity particularly among the urban classes. As well as reflecting changes in cities, posters become a form of mass culture shaping new identities and moral values. After the founding of PRC, commercial calendars were reformed and reconstructed along with other "old" forms of mass culture. Political propaganda, once mainly targeted at peasants during wartime, replaced commercial marketing as the main purpose of poster art. Revolution and building a new country were the new themes of propaganda posters. The state integrated propaganda into people's daily life and helped them either actively or passively to develop a new sense of personal identity and set of values in the revolutionary era. In the reform era, with its longing for modernisation and globalisation, Shanghai, a highly commercialised city, is re-shaping its image and mass culture based on cultural legacies Commercialism and nationalist inherited from the colonial and revolutionary period. discourses weave together in this post-modernist period to reconstruct historical memories from the colonial and revolutionary eras.

Chen Ruilin is a professor at the Academy of Art and Design, Tsinghua University. A graduate of the Art History Department of China Central Academy of Fine Arts he was previously deputy director of the department of History and Theory of Arts of CCAFA; deputy librarian of CCAFA library; editor of *Meishu*, a journal by Chinese Artists Association; and editor of "Zhuangshi(装饰)". His academic activities include leading research projects, publishing monographs and journal articles in China and overseas, attending academic conferences and university lecturing at home, and abroad as a visiting scholar at Ohio State University in 2004. He co-researched two projects with the Macao Museum of Art "Early Macao Fine Arts and Sino-Foreign Cultural Exchanges" and "Macao Port and Commercial Art" in 2005/06. Since 2006 he has been co-researching with the Memorial Museum of the Lingnan School of Painting projects on "the Art of Lingnan School in Shanghai" and "Revival of National-Style Painting and Chinese Painting in Guangdong". He has curated and hosted the International Conference of the Art of Lingnan School in Shanghai in 2011, the International Conference of Revival of National-Style Painting and Chinese Painting in Guangdong in 2013, and edited and published conference symposiums.



### **Yang Peiming**

Ha Qiongwen, the Master Chinese Propaganda Poster Artist

#### **Abstract**

The artist Ha Qiongwen is closely associated with propaganda posters. During the Cultural Revolution period, his name became synonymous with propaganda posters. His death saw the end of a special era in modern Chinese art history. The variety and quantity of propaganda posters in the PRC is the largest in the world. Political propaganda reached an unprecedented peak in the Mao era, never to be duplicated. Tens of thousands of art workers served only one purpose in those years – political propaganda. The highest standard for artistic creation at the time was how best to use the most appropriate art skills and techniques to deliver explicitly political messages. Ha Qiongwen's reputation for artistic creation was outstanding among poster artists in Shanghai and even the whole country.

Yang Peiming is Director of Shanghai Propaganda Poster Art Center. He graduated from Shanghai East China Normal University during the Cultural Revolution, working for the travel business for many years. With a passion for propaganda art and having taken on the responsibility for keeping this history of this period alive, he set up Shanghai Propaganda Poster Art Center, which today has a collection of over 6000 items and is the only museum of this kind in China and the world. The collection has been exhibited in New York Asian Society Museum, San Francisco Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Groningen Museum in Holland and is currently on display University of Edinburgh's Adam House.

### Joachim Gentz

Ambiguity of Religious Signs and Claim to Power in Chinese Propaganda Posters

#### **Abstract**

In the late 1930s, propagandizing among the peasantry became possible through the adaptation of images from Chinese folk religion to Communist visual media mainly in the form of new year's prints (nianhua). The adoption of religious visual language into political propaganda continued to grow to an extent that the religious symbolism in the revolutionary art of the Cultural Revolution has been noted time and again in the literature. The paper will in a first step analyse some examples of the propagandistic appropriation of major religious artistic motives and symbols that can be found in CCP propaganda art in the realms of idol worship, public rituals, sacrifice, salvation, cosmic world order, morality, exorcism, ultimate judgement, knowledge and merit. It will then look at how this appropriation and ideological reorganisation of Chinese and Western visual religious culture not only continued but in turn also



has generated a new religious visual culture in China. The Falun gong movement has made use of the same visual codes in their own propaganda and thereby reproduced the same ambiguity in their religio-political language that has been created by the CCP. Both, the CCP and the Falun gong, take recourse to similar religio-political visual performances in their visual self-representations and their competing claims to power.

Joachim Gentz was Junior Professor in Religious Studies in Gottingen and is, from August 2014, Chair in Chinese Philosophy and Religion at the University of Edinburgh with a main research focus on Chinese history of thought. He has published on early Confucian commentarial traditions, Chinese ritual and divination, Chinese interreligious discourses, early Chinese forms of argumentation, Chinese visual traditions, modern Chinese religious policy and Cultural Studies theory in both German and English. His recent English publications include Keywords Re-Oriented (2009) and Understanding Chinese Religions (2012).

### **Christoph Harbsmeier**

The Cartoonist Feng Zikai (1898 - 1975)

#### **Abstract**

This paper will introduce the graphic work of Feng Zikai with special reference to its Japanese background. Feng Zikai was the founding father of the Chinese lyrical and philosophical cartoon, an important essayist and art historian as well as an influential figure in modern Chinese Buddhism.

**Christoph Harbsmeier** is Professor of Chinese in the University of Oslo. He also holds honorary professorships at Peking University, Fudan University (Shanghai), Wuhan University, Zhejiang University, Shanghai Normal University, and East China Normal University. His main work is in the history of science (logic), conceptual history, historical linguistics, and modern Chinese cartoons.

### **Huang Xuelei**

Politics of the Leg: Visual Representations of Female Legs and Propaganda Culture in China, 1930s—1970s

#### **Abstract**

There is no denying that, as Jean Baudrillard has pointed out, the body is a 'cultural fact.' What is considered beautiful or ugly has always been influenced by various agencies. Politics is an Important agency that shapes different understandings of the human body. This paper examines visual representations of female legs in posters, films, and popular magazines in



China during two periods: the 1930s and the 1966–1976 Cultural Revolution. In 1930s Chinese popular media, images of women's legs were an object of dispute relating to American popular culture versus Soviet socialist culture. Whereas sexy female legs were deemed quintessentially Western, Soviet culture was largely desexualized in left-wing political discourses.

By means of analysing a variety of visual sources, I argue that representations of women's legs created a visual spectacle that linked ostensibly disparate genres, media forms, and practices including Hollywood musicals, chorus girls, Soviet propaganda movies, Chinese dance troupes, popular pictorials, and political magazines. Political polemics and the real reception of cultural artefacts were not in agreement. Much the same can be said of Cultural Revolution poster art. Female legs were supposedly not the focus of propaganda posters, plays and movies during the period. Upon close inspection, however, we find that sexuality was not a non-existent element in political propaganda. In doing so, this paper discusses the relationship between politics and human desires and feelings.

**Huang Xuelei** is Chancellor's Fellow in Chinese Studies at the University of Edinburgh. She received her PhD from the University of Heidelberg in 2009. Her book entitled *Shanghai Filmmaking: Crossing Borders, Connecting to the Globe, 1922–1938* will be published by Brill in September 2014. She has published essays on Chinese cinema and popular culture in Modern Chinese Literature and Culture, Twentieth-Century China, and The Chinese Cinema Book (BFI). She has won the Ruprecht Karls Prize, an Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellowship, and others. Her research interests focus on early Chinese cinema, print culture, and social history of modern China.

### Zheng Ji

Model Citizens of Modern China: Visual Representations of Film Stars in the 1930s

#### **Abstract**

The film star constituted an indispensable part of Chinese visual culture during the first golden age of Chinese cinema in the 1930s. Film stars' images not only appeared on film-related media forms such as film texts, film posters, studios' publicity materials, but also widely circulated on other forms of mass media, including newspapers/tabloids, pictorials and magazines, advertisings, commercial calendars, packages of consumer goods, postcards, and so on. The same time period also saw the improvement of film stars' social reputation in Chinese society in which entertainers were used to be considered as unrespectable and degraded. However, the changing social reputation of film stars as entertainers in 1930s was not merely a simple result of their increasing visibility on mass media and the flourish of the film industry. I would argue that film stars were portrayed as model modern Chinese citizens by different social groups with



their own agendas, which in turn raised stars' reputation. In this paper, I will analyse why in the 1930s film stars were selected to be representations of model modern Chinese people, how such images were constructed in visual culture, and what messages were delivered.

**Zheng Ji** recently received her PhD from the University of Edinburgh in 2013. Her research interests include early Chinese cinema, film star culture, and cinephilia culture.

### Yang Chia-ling

Historicising Visions in Shanghai Posters

#### **Abstract**

This paper poses a case study on early posters and its origins in Shanghai during the late 19th to early twentieth-century. It first concerns the artistic exchange between selected artists and agents in Shanghai and Japan. It will focus on the relationship between Shen Bao and the increasing use of visuality in advertising culture, and how certain intellectuals contributed to the growth of calendar posters, with an eye to their stylistic shifts and reflections on changing society in China. This paper also aims to investigate illustration practices and how Shanghai artists incorporated inspiration from Japanese and Western pictorials in order to look modern.

Chia-Ling Yang received her PhD at University of London-SOAS, is senior lecturer in Chinese art at University of Edinburgh and the board member of QAA Benchmark Committee (2007-2017). She is the author of New Wine in Old Bottles—Art of Ren Bonian in Nineteenth-Century Shanghai (Saffron, 2007), Painted Dream from Shanghai-The World of Ren Bonian (畫夢上海-任 伯年的筆墨世界, Taipei: Artco., 2011), co-author with Yu Hui and Roderick Whitfield of Classical Chinese Art: Selected Catalogue of the Paintings and Calligraphy, Wou Lien-Pai Museum (HK: Orientations, 2011), co-editor with Roderick Whitfield of Lost Generation: Luo Zhenyu, Qing Loyalists and the Formation of Modern Chinese Culture (London: Saffron, 2012), and guest-editor of Art in Translation journal on special issue 'Chinese Art: Translation, Adaptation and Modalities' (June 2013). Her recent exhibition catalogue contributions are Masterpieces of Chinese Painting 700-1900 (London: V & A, 2013), L'Ecole de Shanghai (1840-1920): Peintures et Calligraphies du Musée de Shanghai (Paris: Musée Cernuschi, 2013) and Fabien Mérelle | Elles et moi (HK: Edouard Malingue Gallery, 2013).



### Julia Andrews

Reconstructing Lu Xun: The Cultural Revolution Poster as Woodcut

#### **Abstract**

This talk examines the visual genealogy of posters made during the early years of the Cultural Revolution and the ideological implications of the aesthetic choices made by Red Guard poster designers.

Julia F. Andrews, a scholar of modern Chinese art, is Professor of History of Art at Ohio State University. She completed her Ph.D. at UC Berkeley in Chinese painting under the late James Cahill. Her first book, Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China (1994), won the Joseph Levenson book prize for 20th Century China from the Association of Asian Studies. Her more recent volume, Art of Modern China (2012), co-authored with Kuiyi Shen, won the Humanities book prize of the International Convention of Asia Scholars in 2013. She has also curated a number of exhibitions, most with scholarly catalogues. They include Fragmented Memory: The Chinese Avant-Garde in Exile (1993); Literature in Line: Lianhuanhua Picture Stories from China (1997); A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth Century China (Guggenheim, 1998); Picturing Power: Posters of the Cultural Revolution (1999); Between the Thunder and the Rain: Chinese Paintings from the Opium War to the Cultural Revolution, 1840-1979 (2000); Chinese Painting on the Eve of the Communist Revolution: The Art and Collection of Chang Shu-ch'i (2006); Blooming in the Shadows: Unofficial Chinese Art, 1974-1985 (2011); and Light Before Dawn: Unofficial Chinese Art, 1974-1985 (2013). She is currently studying art societies and groups in Republican China.

#### **Katharine Burnett**

"Sweet Dreams are Made of This. Who Am I to Disagree?": Pictorial Textiles of the Cultural Revolution

#### **Abstract**

This paper explores a selection of pictorial textile propaganda art in the collection of the Shanghai Propaganda Art Center with the goal of shedding light on this important yet neglected medium. The paper shows how these items share the same messages as the more predominant propaganda posters, but differs in function from public to personal and intimately private use.



Katharine Burnett is Associate Professor of Chinese Art History at the University of California, Davis. She has published articles on various topics from the seventeenth century to the present ranging from Chinese art criticism and theory, art collection and display, painting, and propaganda art. Most recently, she published Dimensions of Originality: Essays on Seventeenth-Century Chinese Art Theory and Criticism (Chinese University Press, 2013). She also has curated several exhibitions, including Visualizing Revolution: Propaganda Posters from the People's Republic of China, 1949-1989, with objects from the Shanghai Propaganda Art Center. Currently, she is working on a book, Pang Yuanji (1864-1949): Artist, Patron, Collector, Dealer. Her newest project concerns tea, and she is leading the Research Cluster, All Things Tea: Tea Culture and Science at UC Davis.

### **Paul Pickowicz**

Cultural Revolution Posters: Intended and Unintended Messages

#### **Abstract**

This talk is based on a personal collection of propaganda posters gathered in various parts of China in the summer of 1971, mid-way through the Cultural Revolution. Topics include representations of Mao, key social classes, cultural developments, gender, the natural environment, foreigners, regions of China, and Taiwan. Chinese posters are also compared to early Soviet posters. What messages did the propagandists intend to communicate? What was the nature of unintended messages contained in the posters and how do we explain the thrust of unintended messages?

Paul G. Pickowicz is Distinguished Professor of History and Chinese Studies at the University of California, San Diego, and inaugural holder of the UC San Diego Endowed Chair in Modern Chinese History. His books (authored, co-authored, and co-edited) include Marxist Literary Thought in China (1981), Unofficial China (1989), Chinese Village, Socialist State (1992, winner of the Joseph R. Levenson Prize of the Association for Asian Studies), New Chinese Cinemas (1994), Popular China (2002), Revolution, Resistance, and Reform in Village China (2005), From Underground to Independent (2006), The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History (2006), Dilemmas of Victory (2007), China on the Margins (2010), Radicalism, Revolution, and Reform in Modern China (2011), China on Film (2012), Restless China (2013), and Liangyou: Kaleidoscopic Modernity and the Shanghai Global Metropolis (2013). He has won three distinguished teaching awards: UC San Diego Alumni Association (1998), Chancellor's Associates (2009), and Academic Senate (2003). He is associate producer of the documentary film The Mao Years, 1949-1976 (1994).



#### Natascha Gentz

Representing, Constructing or Reinventing Jiang Qing

#### **Abstract**

Studies on the CR have been dominated by narratives, which focus on the "power struggle" model. As a leader of the "Gang of Four", and as such given a prominent role ex posto within the power struggle, Jiang Qing would be an obvious suspect to have featured on propaganda posters. In this light, posters of Jiang Qing are indeed rare, but at the same time Jiang Qing is the only member of the CCRG to feature in single posters. An historical and close reading of these posters against Jiang Qing's biography aims to explain the evolution of a discourse on Jiang Qing as a leader in visual representations during the CR differing from the master narratives of the 1981 Resolution and the ensuing general ex posto reception.

**Natascha Gentz** joined the University of Edinburgh in May 2006 as Chair of Chinese Studies. She also holds the roles of Dean International China and Director of the Confucius Institute for Scotland. She graduated from Heidelberg University with MA (1994) and PhD (1998) degrees. Her studies included residences at Fudan University, Shanghai (1988-1990), People's University, Beijing (1995-6), and Tokyo University (1997). After her PhD she was engaged in various funded research projects and in teaching in the Chinese Departments at Heidelberg and

Göttingen University. In 2002 she became Junior Professor at Frankfurt University, from where she came to Edinburgh. Her publications include a monograph on the history Chinese journalism; two edited volumes, one on transcultural knowledge transfer in Late Qing China and one on how global media are shaping cultural identities. She has also published a book on contemporary Chinese historical drama as well as dozens of articles on Late Qing and contemporary Chinese drama, literature and media. She has also translated a novel and two volumes of short stories by the Chinese Nobel laureate Gao Xingjian.



### **Richard King**

The Microphone and the Pen: Delivering the Message in the 1976 Yangquan Counter-Attack Poster

#### **Abstract**

"One side has the microphone and the pen, while the other side has the economy and the rifle." Enver Hoxha, Summer 1976

The poster Taking Class Struggle as the Key Link, Counter-Attack the Rightist Wind to Overturn Verdicts: Selected Fine-arts Big-character Posters by the Workers of Yangquan, comprising sixteen images and a "publisher's statement," was produced in March 1976 by amateur artists from Yangquan, an industrial complex in Shanxi province with an established tradition of producing wall-paintings and propaganda art. The poster represents one side of the struggle for succession to the highest leadership in the final months of the Cultural Revolution, and most of the images depict the technologies by which the message of the current campaign was to be delivered. My presentation will provide historical and political context for the 1976 "counter-attack," introduce the "fine-arts big-character posters and wall-paintings" of the worker-artists of Yangquan, and offer a reading of the Yangquan counter-attack poster.

Richard King teaches Chinese language, literature, and film, Asian popular culture, and research methods at the University of Victoria, Canada. He is also the curator of the University's Chinese propaganda poster website. He is most recently the author of Milestones on a Golden Road: Writing for Chinese Socialism 1945-1980 (UBC Press, 2013), co-editor of Sino-Japanese Transculturation. (Lexington Books, 2012), co-translator and editor of Heroes of China's Great Leap Forward: Two Stories (University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), and editor of Art in Turmoil: the Chinese Cultural Revolution 1966-1976 (UBC Press, 2010), and has contributed chapters to Steve Smith ed., The Oxford Handbook in the History of Communism (Oxford UP, 2014), Wang Ban ed., Words and Their Stories (Brill, 2010), Kimberley Ens Manning and Felix Wemheuer ed., Eating Bitterness: the Great Leap Forward (UBC Press, 2010), two entries on Chinese literature for the Oxford Online Bibliographies (2013), and a translation to the journal Renditions (2013).



#### **Denise Ho**

Posters, Exhibitions, and Museums as Pedagogy

#### **Abstract**

Exhibitions in China have been and are "living classrooms." This paper explores the historical and contemporary use of exhibitions, with two goals: to examine how museums functioned in the history of the People's Republic, and to reflect on how poster art might be used in a classroom today. Using the experience of bringing international college students to visit Yang Peiming's Propaganda Poster Art Centre, the paper first describes what students learned and experienced, with suggestions for future visits. How did students, some of them first-time visitors to China, approach the posters? What part of their visit most affected them? Next, I describe the process by which exhibitions were created in the Mao period, focusing on three themes: collection, narration, and political movements. I argue that exhibitions gave visitors templates for understanding the world they inhabited, and the vocabulary and repertoire for participating in political campaigns. Finally, in the third section I suggest that in teaching with Chinese exhibitions today, instructors should place them in historical context, thus allowing students to consider not only the historical legacy of posters or artefacts, but also the environment in which they were seen.

**Denise Y. Ho** received her Ph.D. in Modern Chinese History from Harvard University in 2009, and is an assistant professor in the Centre for China Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. She has published articles in The China Quarterly, Frontiers of History in China, and History Compass, and she also has blogged for The China Beat, The Atlantic, and Dissent Magazine. Denise Y. Ho is completing her first book manuscript, Curating Revolution: Politics on Display in Mao's China.



### Kevin McLoughlin

A Newly Acquired Collection of Chinese Propaganda Posters at the National Museum of Scotland

#### **Abstract**

The National Museum of Scotland has in recent years developed a collection of New China and Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) era propaganda posters and Maoist memorabilia, ceramics, and lacquer ware. This presentation will introduce this newly formed collection, and consider not only how it fits in relation to other Chinese material in the NMS Chinese Collection, but why it was judged important to collect this material and what it means when museums collect and exhibit this kind of material. In addition, further questions arise around what role this material will play in interpreting the New China period to the audiences of a multi-disciplinary museum, and what are the challenges of curating this material in relation to Chinese culture and history as a whole.

**Kevin McLoughlin** is currently Principal Curator for the East and Central Asian collections at the National Museum of Scotland. He previously worked at Durham University Museums, the Barlow Collection at the University of Sussex, and the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin. He was educated at the National College of Art & Design, Dublin; Beijing Language University (Beijing Yuyan Daxue); and did postgraduate degrees at the universities of Durham and Sussex. Areas of curatorial, academic, and research interest include Chinese book and print culture; Chinese Buddhist art; Ming visual and material culture; Cultural Revolution era propaganda arts of the People's Republic of China; visual and material culture of traditional Korea; and Tibetan Buddhist art and visual culture.

