Visual Practices in China since the Cultural Revolution (London, 29 May 26)

University of Westminster, Central London campus, Fyvie Hall, 309 Regent Street, W1B 2HW, May 29, 2026

Lauren Walden, Birmingham City University UK

From the masses to the masses: visual practices in China since the Cultural Revolution

CCVA-CCC Symposium co-organised by the Centre for Contemporary Visual Arts Asia (Birmingham City University) and the Contemporary China Centre (University of Westminster).

Sixty years ago, in May, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was officially launched under guiding principles issued by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Despite its top-down directive, it culminated in a bottom-up mass movement across the country. Two key developments heralded the Cultural Revolution nationwide: the popularisation of the big-character poster (dazibao) and the emergence of the Red Guards. This symposium marks these two anniversaries by re-examining the role of 'mass art' in a contemporary context.

Jointly organised by Westminster's Contemporary China Centre and Birmingham City University's Centre for Contemporary Visual Arts Asia, this one-day symposium brings together a group of international scholars and is open to the public. Registration is required via this link.

Programme
10.30–11.00am
Welcome Address
Professor Gerda Wielander (University of Westminster) and Professor Joshua Jiang (Birmingham City University)

Panel One: Labouring Bodies

11.00am–12.30pm
Chair: Professor Gerda Wielander

11.00–11.15am
Zhining Ding (Courtauld Institute of Art)
'Re-writing the Syntax of the Foolish Old Man: Visual Practices and Subjective Reconstruction in China'

11.15–11.30am
Han Shuying (Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts, China / Birmingham City University)
'From Outcry to Construction: Popular Art in the Revolutionary Woodcut Movement and the Art-

Led Rural Reconstruction’

11.30–11.45am
Dr Isabel Wolte (University of Vienna)
‘From Poster to Film: Barefoot Doctors and the Role of the Film Studio’

11.45am–12.00pm
Zhongping Mao (University College London)
‘From Modelling to Mass Practice: Co-producing the Three Gorges Dam Image after the Cultural Revolution’

12.00–12.30pm
Panel discussion and audience Q&A

12.30–1.30pm
Lunch (a wide variety of eateries are located nearby)

Panel Two: Masses as Producers

1.30–3.00pm
Chair: Dr Federica Mirra (University of Macerata / Birmingham City University)

1.30–1.45pm
Dr Mi Zhou (University of St Andrews)
‘The Contemporary Afterlives of Cultural Revolution-Era Vernacular Photography in the Old Photo Serial’

1.45–2.00pm
Kimberly Lee (Wereldmuseum, Leiden)
‘From Wall to Archive: Mass Art and Moral Education in Chinese Posters of the Early Reform Era’

2.00–2.15pm
Dr Shao Jiang (University of Oxford)
‘Wall Posters and Satirical Image-Texts: Rethinking Mass Art as Mass Authorship in China, 1966–1989’

2.15–2.30pm
Dr Yanhua Zhou (Kennesaw State University / Sichuan Fine Arts Institute)
‘Institutionalised Participation and the Precarious Masses: Reconfiguring Socially Engaged Art under “Rural Revitalisation” in Contemporary China’

2.30–3.00pm
Panel discussion and audience Q&A

3.00–3.30pm
Coffee break

Panel Three: Cross-Cultural Resonances of Mass Art

3.30–5.00pm
Chair: Dr Lauren Walden (Birmingham City University)

3.30–3.45pm
Laura Maria Cinquini (University of Turin)
‘Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, a Mass Art for Them All: Popular Glass and Mirror Paintings in the Early People’s Republic of China’

3.45–4.00pm
Dr Daniela C. Zhang (Comenius University, Bratislava)
‘Pop, Ink, and the Refusal of Seriousness: Artistic Strategies after Experimental Ink in Contemporary China’

4.00–4.15pm
Rucheng Yang (Birmingham City University)
‘Citywalk as Mass Visual Practice: From Embodied Looking to Urban Micro-Generation in China’

4.15–4.30pm
Dianna Su (Beijing Normal University)
‘A Curated “Encounter”: The Misreading of Huxian Peasant Painting in Studio International (1975)’

4.30–5.00pm
Panel discussion and audience Q&A

5.00–5.30pm
Roundtable discussion with Professor Joshua Jiang and Professor Gerda Wielander, followed by closing remarks

5.30–6.30pm
Drinks reception

Location
Fyvie Hall, 309 Regent Street, University of Westminster, W1B 2HW

Best wishes,
Dr. Lauren Walden (Birmingham City University).

Please consult the following link for the programme and to reserve your complimentary place: https://www.westminster.ac.uk/events/from-the-masses-to-the-masses-visual-practices-in-china-since-the-cultural-revolution

Reference:
CONF: Visual Practices in China since the Cultural Revolution (London, 29 May 26). In: ArtHist.net, May 11, 2026 (accessed Nov 23, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/52427>.