One Finger, One Road: Political Journeys in Contemporary Chinese Art

November 18, 2022

HOSTED ONLINE:
FREE & OPEN TO ALL
2:00pm-4:30pm Eastern
1:00pm-3:30pm Central
11:00am-1:30pm Pacific
9:00am-11:30am Hawaii

SPEAKERS:
Dr. Shelley Drake Hawks
Middlesex Community College
Dr. Sasha Su-Ling Welland
University of Washington

The interplay of art and politics has a long history in China. This half-day workshop will explore their relationship at two critical junctures in recent Chinese history: in the years leading up to the Cultural Revolution and in those following the launch of China’s ambitious One Belt One Road Initiative. The online program will include both lectures and discussions and is free for registered participants.

REGISTER HERE
"One-Finger-Chan": Pan Tianshou's Art of Resistance
Dr. Shelley Drake Hawks, Middlesex Community College

This presentation focuses on Pan Tianshou’s paintings just prior to the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), during which Pan died tragically, interpreting his work from the perspective of Chan/Zen Buddhism. Pan is revered as one of the 20th century’s foremost innovators of Chinese painting and a rare master of painting in ink with finger, fingernail, and bare hand. As president of China National Art Academy in Hangzhou, Pan argued against blending Chinese art with Western art forms and encouraged growth and experimentation from within the parameters of China’s centuries-long traditions. Pan prized Chan Buddhism for its emphasis on simplicity and freedom from rules, and this session explores how his best finger paintings function as koans (gong-an)—puzzles used by Chan teachers to guide students to enlightenment.

What Art Asks along China’s Belt and Road
Dr. Sasha Su-Ling Welland, University of Washington

This talk is based on an essay, co-authored with Christina Yuen Zi Chung, “Wandering Geographies: Aesthetic Practice along China’s Belt and Road Initiative” (2021), published in a special issue of Feminist Studies on Global Intimacies: China and/in the Global South. China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also known as the New Silk Road, aspires to create a China-centered global trading network through investment in infrastructure projects across dozens of countries. This talk focuses on contemporary art that makes visible minor transnational connections along the edges of this top-down plan. Selected works by Sinophone artists ask that we attend to the materiality and movement of bodies, things, resources, and ways of seeing, as they give form to hidden histories of gendered labor, care work, environmental extraction, diaspora, and displacement.