

Panel Title: Rethinking Collective: Mapping on the Development of Woodblock Printing Collectives in Inter-Asian Societies

Transformation in the Image of “People”

Rethink Chinese Modern Woodcut Printing in Historical Context

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The expression of “people”(人民) who belongs to the nameless public is the most significant revolution in the 1930s Chinese woodcut printing. From the 1930s to the 1980s, following the history and social process, the figure of “people” experienced a multiple transformations in Chinese woodcut prints. Not only as a new historical subjectivity, but the advance of “people” also represents the awakening of modern Chinese art. The sharp contrast of black and white images has already become a typical representative of popularization and revolutionary ideals.

Thus, how does the woodcut printing become an art form that represents “people”? Furthermore, it is patently obvious that there are many contemporary Chinese artists around the 1980s conceiving woodcuts in their very own way, and whether intentionally or unwittingly, echoes the revolutionary aesthetics in the early modern woodcut movement. Then why this phenomenon still exists in contemporary Chinese artworks and what does the “people” mean to Chinese contemporary woodcut creation?

This research will take the image of “people” as a clue, attempting to recall the era when woodcut was made into political propaganda from a retrospective perspective and rethink woodcut’s position in the context of Chinese modern art. Also, from the vantage point of collectivism, this article aims to facilitate dialogues in the realm of Inter-Asia woodcut network.

Keywords: image of “people”, modern woodcut printing, revolutionary, political propaganda, popularization