CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN CHINA
MICHAEL KEANE

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN CHINA

China Today

Creative Industries in China, Michael Keane
Urban China, Xuefei Ren
China's Environmental Challenges, Judith Shapiro

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN CHINA

Art, Design and Media

Michael Keane

polity

The publisher has used its best endeavours to ensure that the URLs for external websites referred to in this book are correct and active at the time of going to press. However, the publisher has no responsibility for the websites and can make no guarantee that a site will remain live or that the content is or will remain appropriate.

Every effort has been made to trace all copyright holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked the publisher will be pleased to include any necessary credits in any subsequent reprint or edition.

For further information on Polity, visit our website: www.politybooks.com
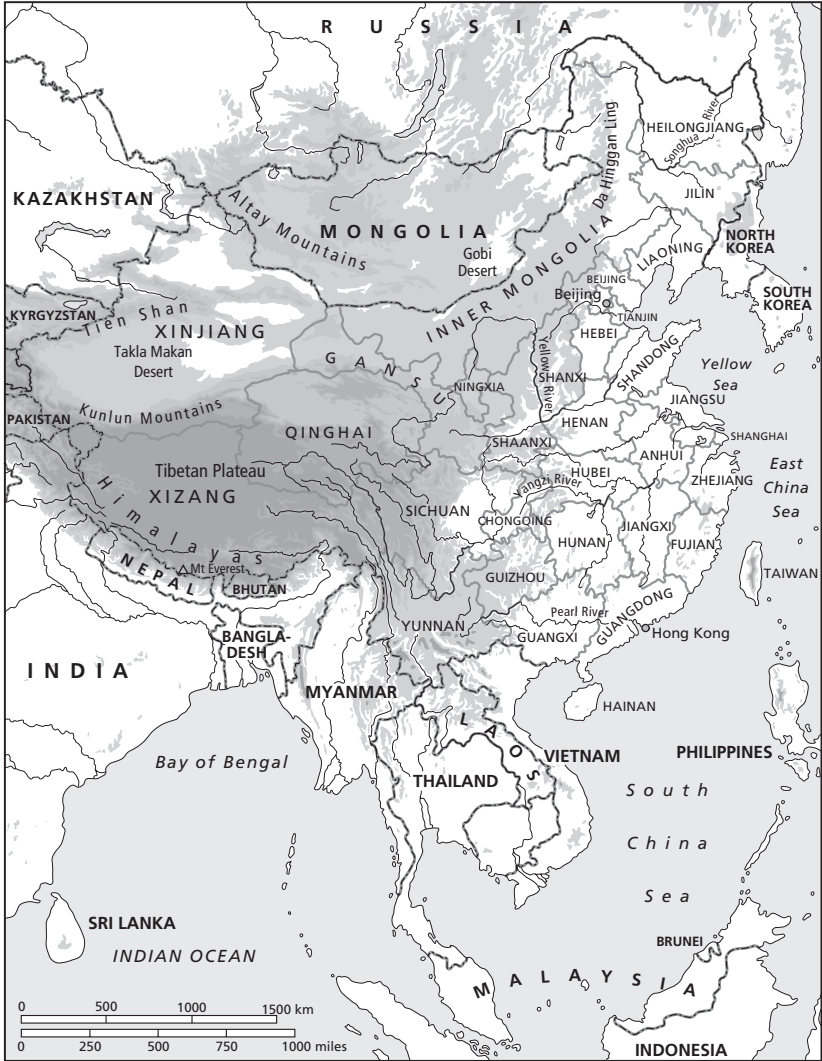
Contents

Detailed Contents

R U S S I A

KAZAKHSTAN

MONGOLIA

Altay Mountains

Gobi
Desert

HEILONGJIANG

songhua River

JILIN

INNER MONGOLIA

Da Hinggan Ling

LIAONING

NORTH
KOREA

KYRGYZSTAN

Tien Shan

XINJIANG

Takla Makan
Desert

BEIJING

Beijing

TIANJIN

HEBEI

SHANXI

Yellow River

NINGXIA

G A N S U

SHANDONG

Yellow
Sea

SOUTH
KOREA

PAKISTAN

Kunlun Mountains

QINGHAI

HENAN

JIANGSU

SHAANXI

ANHUI

SHANGHAI

Tibetan Plateau

XIZANG

H
i
m
a
l
a
y
a
s

SICHUAN

HUBEI

Yangzi River

CHONGQING

ZHEJIANG

East
China
Sea

△Mt Everest

NEPAL

BHUTAN

HUNAN

JIANGXI

FUJIAN

BANGLA-
DESH

GUIZHOU

TAIWAN

I N D I A

YUNNAN

GUANGXI

GUANGDONG

Pearl River

Hong Kong

MYANMAR

HAINAN

Bay of Bengal

L
A
O
S

VIETNAM

PHILIPPINES

THAILAND

South

China

Sea

SRI LANKA

INDIAN OCEAN

BRUNEI

M A L A Y S I A

INDONESIA

| 0 | 500 | 1000 | 1500 km |
| 0 | 250 | 500 | 750 | 1000 miles |

Abbreviations

CCP: Chinese Communist Party
CCTV: China Central Television
CPD: Central Propaganda Department: also know as Central Publicity
  Department
CPPCC: Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
GAPP: General Administration of Press and Publications
MIIT: Ministry of Industry and Information Technology
MoC: Ministry of Culture
MoF: Ministry of Finance
PRD: Pearl River Delta
SAIC: State Administration of Industry and Commerce
SARFT: State Administration of Radio, Film and Television
UNCTAD: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
WTO: World Trade Organization

Figures and Tables ———————

Chronology

1966–76	Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution
February 1972	'Shanghai Communiqué', issued during Richard Nixon's visit to China, pledges that neither the US nor China will 'seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region'
July 1976	Tangshan Earthquake, believed to be the largest earthquake of the twentieth century by death toll
September 1976	Death of Mao Zedong
November 1976	'Smashing' of the ultra-leftist Gang of Four
1977–8	Beijing Spring; brief period of political liberalization and public dissent, culminating in the Democracy Wall Movement
1978	Third Plenary Session of Eleventh Party Committee: return to power of Deng Xiaoping and adoption of Four Modernizations platform
1978	Beginning of Chinese economic reforms
1978	One-child policy restricting married urban couples to having one child
October 1979	Guiding principles announced for the development of arts and cultural institutions in reform era
December 1984	Margaret Thatcher co-signs Sino-British Joint Declaration, agreeing to transfer sovereignty over Hong Kong to the PRC in 1997
4 June 1989	Tiananmen Square massacre
January 1992	Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour of Shenzhen
July 1997	Transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong
1998	Initiation of the Golden Shield Project or 'Great Firewall of China', an electronic surveillance and censorship project
May 1999	US bombing of Chinese embassy in Belgrade

1999	National campaign to eradicate Falun Gong practitioners
2000	PRC passes Japan as the country with which the USA has the largest trade deficit
2000	Debates begin to surface about protecting national cultural security
2001	Accession to the World Trade Organization
2001	First formal use of 'cultural industries' in relation to reform of the cultural system
2003	Reform of the cultural system becomes a national strategic goal
2003	SARS outbreak
2004	The term 'creative industries' is first used in Shanghai
2005	Anti-Secession Law formalizes PRC's policy of using 'non-peaceful means' against Taiwan in the event of a Taiwanese declaration of independence
2007	China overtakes USA as world's biggest emitter of CO_2
2008	Sichuan Earthquake
2008	Beijing hosts the Summer Olympic Games
2009	The cultural industries become a key element of the national economic strategy
2010	Yushu earthquake
2010	Shanghai World Expo, the most expensive in the history of World Fairs

Acknowledgements

Introduction

In 2000, the *New Yorker* staff writer Malcolm Gladwell (2000) popularized the idea of a 'tipping point'. Gladwell describes how ideas move through populations, virus-like, often defying logical explanation. Some ideas are successful because they are ground-breaking; but many gain momentum in different ways, through different channels. A tipping point can occur as a result of a fad; for instance, the viral effects of online social networks. Alternatively, a tipping point occurs because social environments are in a state of readiness; that is, an idea, fad or innovation falls on already fertile ground.

   This book concerns a tipping point, a moment of critical mass. The idea that creativity is essential for the renewal of Chinese society is now widely accepted; for some it has become a rallying call for nationalism; for others, a catalyst for institutional reform. Major events such as the Beijing Olympics and the Shanghai World Expo have showcased China's creative accomplishments, which the national government promotes as 'cultural soft power'. Annual festivals, including the Beijing International Cultural and Creative Industries Expo, the Shenzhen Cultural Industries Expo and the Shanghai Creative Industries Activities Week attract entrepreneurs, investors, academics, policy makers, spectators and practitioners. Long regarded as trouble makers, artists are rewarded for their contributions to the national soft power campaign. Film celebrities such Zhang Ziyi and Jackie Chan (Cheng Long) present a brand-new image of China to the world's audiences, while high-profile dissidents like Ai Weiwei and Liu Xiaobo remind

the world that the new branding has some way to go. The construction of hundreds of creative clusters, parks, bases, zones, precincts and incubators, often situated around the fringes of cities, provide spaces to work and opportunities for exhibition, production and interactive learning.

This book traces pathways that have made creativity a mainstream concern in China today. In late 2003, a small forum was convened in Brisbane at the Queensland University of Technology on the future of the creative industries 'movement' globally and the implications for China.[1] The US-based scholar Jing Wang's comments at that event caught my attention (J. Wang 2004). Her remarks were noteworthy not because of scepticism, which was to be anticipated, but because she highlighted that the 'least problematic' idea in a western liberal democracy, that of 'creativity', might be *the most problematic* in China.

Ten years later, the problem of creativity remains. But creativity is harmonized, stripped of profane elements, and turned into economy. It is accorded a supporting role at the high altar of soft power. Culture too is increasingly secularized and industrialized. Its products are endless: films, paintings, carpets, souvenirs, theme parks, ceramics, books, magazines, acrobatic troupes, minority dances, operas, cartoons, fashion garments, buildings, malls, precincts, video games, CDs, advertisements, toys, furniture . . . the list goes on. Scholars in China compete to list, index and compare provincial, municipal and district outputs.

How did this come about and what does it mean?

In this book I argue that Chinese culture has reached a point of change, unparalleled since the first decade of the twentieth century when the New Culture Movement generated a series of external shocks to the Confucian imperial system. In today's globalized and interconnected world, many outside China believe that the power of international ideas will eventually make China more like the rest of the world, either gradually, a 'silent transformation' (see Jullien 2011), or through

some form of anti-government revolution. One such global idea is liberal democracy. The online communications revolution beginning in the 1990s provided an opportunity for the world to break through barriers: the trickle of international ideas that navigated past the barriers rapidly turned into a stream of pop culture; as Chua Beng-Huat notes, most of this emanated from East Asia (Chua 2012). When China moved to join the World Trade Organization in that decade, the US entertainment industry began to prepare for an assault in anticipation of market liberalization. Jack Valenti, then head of the Motion Pictures Association of America commented:

> Trade is much more than goods and services. It's an exchange of ideas. Ideas go where armies cannot venture. The result of idea exchange as well as trade is always the collapse of barriers between nations (Valenti 2000).

The Chinese leadership, which had constructed barriers, needed an industrial force to combat the so-called 'Hollywood wolves'. China joined the WTO in December 2001. In that year, policy leaders had agreed on the term 'cultural industries' (*wenhua chanye* 文化产业). Within a few years an international term, the 'creative industries' (*chuangyi chanye* 创意产业) had gained momentum, mainly among actors looking to evade the dogmatic strictures of state cultural policy.

Despite a belief that the creative industries in China were an alternative to the more political and highly regulated cultural industries, they would eventually come to represent an ideological position, reminding conservatives of the danger of 'peaceful evolution', the viewpoint expressed by John Dulles, US Secretary of State in the 1950s, that democratization comes gradually rather than suddenly. In a political system that views culture as a public resource, the momentum of market forces raises issues of 'national cultural security' (*guojia wenhua anquan* 国家文化安全).

The key themes that inform the discussion of *Creative Industries in China* are as follows:

- Tensions are continuing to play out between political culture and commercial creativity in China.
- Policy makers, academics and even many ordinary citizens hope that the nation will become a 'creative nation' rather than a producer of cheap imitative products shipped to overseas markets.
- The cultural and creative industries are viewed by many Chinese scholars as the means by which China will radiate its 'soft power' to the world.

In addressing these issues, I move beyond the conventional disciplinary boundaries of media and cultural studies. Media (and communication) studies research on China has to a large extent focused on ideological representations. As a consequence, a large number of books, articles and PhD dissertations follow a similar route. In expanding the map, I draw on insights from economic and cultural geography. I also venture into philosophical issues that are probably best left to sinologists. My attempts to dig at some of the cultural foundations of creativity run the risk of finding other holes, in turn raising more difficult questions. If that is the case, then I will have achieved some measure of success.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF CULTURAL WORK

Much is at stake in China's initiatives to industrialize its culture. In order to understand what the industrialization of culture portends, consider occupational choices now available to graduates of universities and training institutions in China. Demand is particularly high for 'cultural planners' – people with a tertiary degree in economics, arts administration and urban planning. So lucrative has this field become in recent years that many cultural planners and 'cultural intermediaries'

come from fine arts, animation, design, IT and photography backgrounds. Other growing industries that are attracting a new breed of skilled workers are video games and interactive web design. To this list we can add ancillary occupations surrounding film and television such as special effects, set construction, media management and marketing.

Compare these choices to the 1980s and early 1990s. People who produced movies, wrote TV drama screenplays and news stories, and performed theatrical works were employees of the state. Their work may well have been gratifying, and at times exciting, but state cultural workers (*wenhua gongzuo zhe* 文化工作者) did not countenance the idea of a having a career in an 'industry'. Working inside a propaganda unit was a secure job; that is until the mid-1990s when the state began to turn many of its media and cultural institutions (*shiye* 事业) into industries (*chanye* 产业).

Industrialization is not just a phase of development of the late twentieth century in China. In the early decades of the century, import statistics were used as shock tactics to remind Chinese people of the 'threat' of foreign products. Prior to the Communist revolution, successful industrial entrepreneurs were lauded as patriots (Gerth 2003). Today the focus has changed somewhat: the national government has campaigns to generate 'soft power', to stimulate exports; it protects domestic cultural sectors from international competition, in the process preventing them from being truly internationally competitive; in justifying its interventions, the national government talks a great deal about the importance of creativity and innovation. In the past few years coinciding with the release of the 12th Five Year Economic and Social Development Plan, the focus has turned to the integration of technological innovation and cultural creativity (see Li 2011).

In modern Chinese, four characters are used to describe industry (*ye* 业): these are *shi* 事, *gong* 工, *chan* 产 and *qi* 企. Broadly speaking, *shiye* refers to state institutions; *gongye* highlights the centrality of

manual labour; *chanye* indicates productivity; while *qiye* illustrates the idea of enterprise.

The slogan 'from Made in China to created in China' has become a rallying call for reform. However, it is not a case of simply moving from manufacturing to creative services, from factory to studio or from public culture to commercial enterprise. The reality is more akin to an integration of 'made' and 'created in China'. The focus of reform is 'upgrading' (*shengji* 升级) and 'transforming' (*zhuanxing* 转型). Work practices, routines and forms of market organization from the industrial economy have been transferred into the cultural field. Because of the emphasis on the upgrading of industries, the focus of policy in China is heavily skewed towards providing infrastructure. Local and district governments have followed the national party line and attempted to 'construct' (*jianshe* 建设) new eco-friendly industries by providing assistance for the redevelopment of industrial districts and dispensing incentives to attract 'talent' (*rencai* 人才). The cultural and creative industries in China are invariably conceptualized as 'clusters', drawing on a tradition of collective management of labour and built environment as well as a legacy of close supervision of cultural workers. The 'tangible' bottom line is economy, described as 'attracting business' (*zhao shang* 招商); the solution to the problems of underperforming structural assets, according to some critics, is in the intangible realm: to 'attract creativity' (*zhao chuang* 招创).

THE ART, DESIGN, MEDIA TRIDENT

A great deal of category confusion surrounds 'creative industries': what they are, what is included; and what is not included. The creative industries are an international concept constructed in Britain in the late 1990s; the term reached China in 2004, three years after the state had ordained the 'cultural industries'. Accordingly, most national policy documents privilege the cultural industries (*wenhua chanye* 文化产

业). The distinction between culture and creativity has political impli-cations: does China 'join the international track' (*yu guoji jiegui* 与国际接轨) or does it maintain its cultural sovereignty?

I provide the reader with some of the main debates over definitions of creativity and creative industries in China as well as interpretations in East Asia and developing countries. In order to avoid confusion, I have opted for a relatively straightforward categorization of art, design and media. These three clusters of activity illustrate the greatest inter-national momentum within China. The first use of these categories came in a report for the Research Council of the National Academies in the US, *Beyond Productivity: Information Technology, Innovation and Creativity* (Mitchell et al. 2003: 19).[2] The authors identified the trident: *arts*, *electronic and new media* and *design-related activities*. In the report, *art* constitutes the visual arts, performing arts, literature and publish-ing, photography, crafts, libraries, museums, galleries, archives, heritage sites and arts festivals; *electronic and new media* includes broadcast, film and television, recorded music, software and digital media; while *design-related activities* are represented by architecture, interior and landscape design, fashion, graphics and communication design and product design. Interestingly, the *Beyond Productivity* report also used another term that is central to China's creative aspirations. This is soft power.

> In a progressively interdependent world where culture tempers and inflames politics as well as markets, strong creative industries are a strategic asset to a nation; the predominance of Hollywood movies; Japanese video games, and Swiss administration of FIFA soccer are forms of soft power that have global, albeit subtle, effects, particularly in countries whose bulging youth populations have access to television and the Internet. (Mitchell et al. 2003: 21)

Beginning our discussion with art is important. Art and culture have been contested and politicized fields in China over the past several

decades. Art draws together traditional forms such as visual and performing arts as well as local opera, contemporary oil painting, dance, theatre and musical performances. These pursuits can be practised by all people; for instance, the popularity of amateur performers in parks and gardens. But when art becomes a commodity form, it has the potential to accrue value. The main focus of policy is to convert cultural resources into economic capital. This is a great challenge for China.

The second part of the trident represents the commercial application of creativity. Many design practices convey a sense of process. Designed products usually exist because clients provide a brief. While design is driven by technical skill, 'innovative' design depends on 'close intellectual alliances with visual and other artists' (Mitchell et al. 2003: 8). Many aspects of design make good use of software programs to aid and accelerate the process of thinking creatively. Computer-aided design, for instance, allows the designer to input specifications and data: in effect the computer provides solutions that may not have been imaginable. Good design is a source of competitive advantage. In China, the most rapidly expanding design sector is urban planning.

The third part of the trident is media. One way of conceptualizing media is 'platforms'; that is, the technological means of disseminating ideas and representations. Media channels provide the means for cultural goods, for instance, a musical performance, to achieve publicity, or to be embedded in another format, such as film scores. In the understanding of media in this book, however, the medium is also the message, recalling Marshall McLuhan's famous dictum (1967). The media industries are therefore the key soft power industries: they produce textual representations that in many cases travel across cultural borders; they provide celebrities that are linked by association to national cultures; furthermore, they seek out novelty and use formats to produce complex cultural goods that can be widely distributed. In this respect, the media are the most complex of the three categories.