

<b>Institution: University of Westminster</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: UoA 27; Area (Asian) Studies</b>
<b>Title of case study: Visual culture, history and memory of Mao's China</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Evans' research on visual culture, history and memory in China has reached diverse audiences through international exhibitions, public lectures, workshops and school outreach projects, and collaborations with Chinese artists and documentary film-makers. In treating the Mao era 'propaganda poster' as an important visual resource for the teaching and learning of 20th century China in schools, her work opens up a new approach to the study of modern and contemporary China in the UK's national curriculum. A recent pioneering outreach project with schools in London has resulted in plans with primary school teachers to develop an online visual resource of the Mao era within the framework of the national Key Stage 2 curriculum and accessible to schools across Camden and beyond. This project includes an important collaboration the Freie University in Berlin (working with Westminster's Sustainable Digital Repository (SDR)) to apply the latest digital archive and internet project management technologies to develop Westminster's Chinese Poster Collection materials as an interactive online resource for the teaching of China to UK primary school pupils. In collaboration with Stephanie Hemelryk Donald (University of New South Wales), the public dissemination of Evans' work in the UK, USA and Australia has also created new spaces for debate amongst Chinese migrants and their children about experiences denied open scrutiny in China.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Evans' research on Cultural Revolution posters produced a widely acclaimed volume (co-edited with Stephanie Hemelryk Donald) <i>Picturing Power: Posters of China's Cultural Revolution</i> (1999). This volume remains the single most important critical analysis of Chinese posters as complex and often ambiguous visual components of a revolutionary discourse. Based on treatment of the poster as discursive text, it offers a narrative of China's modern history that i) departs from the limitations of dominant and official historiography; ii) emphasizes the importance of visual media for critical reflection about a period of China's past denied public discussion in China, and commonly dismissed in UK media accounts of modern China, and iii) draws attention to the need for international critical practice to take detailed and empirical account of Chinese memories and accounts of Mao's China while locating these within global interests molding narratives of China's recent past. Evans has given numerous public lectures, conference and seminar papers on Mao era posters in the UK/EU, USA, Australia and China. Many of these have focused on women and gender, and have included materials from extended interviews with Chinese poster artists and collectors of the 1960s and 1970s, notably from Guangzhou and Shanghai. A paper drawing on this research is included in Jie Li ed. <i>China's Red Legacy</i> (Harvard University Press, forthcoming).</p> <p>Evans' research on Mao era visual culture has benefited from her collaboration with Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, initially when the latter was Research Fellow at the University of Westminster (1997), and since then when Donald visited Westminster as Visiting Research Fellow (2008 and 2010). Evans' work in this field has been further enriched by her close collaboration with Hu Jie and Ai Xiaoming, two of China's most widely acclaimed independent documentary film makers. Evans invited Hu and Ai in 2005 and 2006 respectively to join her as Visiting Research Fellows to explore Westminster's Chinese Poster Collection as a repository of contradictory memories and narratives of Mao's China. Their collaboration with Evans produced two widely disseminated documentary films, 'Painting for the Revolution: Peasant Paintings from Hu County, China' (2007) and 'Red Art' (2007) each of which involved extensive interviews and ethnographically based research in China and the UK.</p> <p>Evans' work on posters and visual culture of the Mao era argues that i) the poster is a powerful, though overlooked, visual tool depicting hierarchies of age, gender and ethnicity and social and</p>

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political status that are commonly missing from retrospective accounts of the period; ii) posters' continuing appeal to diverse audiences across national boundaries produces narratives of the Mao's China that both add to and challenge mainstream accounts of the period; iii) looking at posters can elicit memories of past experiences denied public discussion in China, and the public display of posters in exhibitions gives a public legitimacy to such experiences in accounts of China's recent history; iv) such public display has particular significance for post-1989 transnational migration cohorts;

**3. References to the research**

*Picturing Power in China: Posters of the Cultural Revolution*, co-edited with Stephanie Donald, Bloomington: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999.

'Comrade Sisters: Bodies, Spaces and Gender in Posters of the Cultural Revolution', in Harriet Evans and Stephanie Donald, eds., *Picturing Power in China: Posters of the Cultural Revolution* Bloomington: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999, pp.63-78.

'Fashioning Identities; Consuming Passions: Public Images of Women in China', in *New Formations* (1, 2000): 113-127 (special issue on Culture/China edited by Stephanie Donald and Harriet Evans)

'Ambiguities of address: Cultural Revolution posters and their post-Mao appeal' in Jie Li, ed., *China's Red Legacy*, Harvard University Press (forthcoming). Versions of this paper have been presented to seminars in Harvard University (2010), the AAS (2010) and its arguments contributed to the catalogue essays for the exhibitions 'China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art', University of Sydney Gallery (August 2010-November 2010); RMIT, Melbourne (Jan-March 2011) and 'Poster Power: Images of Mao's China, Then and Now', University of Westminster (May-July, 2011).

Research grants from:

Luce Foundation (USA): \$17,000 for exhibition and international conference on Posters of the Cultural Revolution, Indiana University, USA between August -October 1999.

British Academy: £1650 for symposium on 'Face and Place: Visibility and Invisibility in Chinese Propaganda Posters', Centre for the Study of Democracy, University of Westminster, October 2007.

Universities' China Committee in London: small grants for research visits to Canton and Shanghai (2007) to interview poster artists and collectors

Australian Research Council (Discovery Grant): \$312,000 for research project on 'Posters of the Cultural Revolution: Contemporary Chinese perspectives on an era of propaganda.' (2008-2011, CI: SH Donald; PI: H Evans)

**4. Details of the impact**

Evans' research on visual culture, history and heritage of Mao's China has long engaged with non-academic audiences including curators, journalists, film-makers, art practitioners, school teachers and children and the general public in order to i) use Mao era visual culture, and specifically posters, as a public space for critical debate about Mao's China; ii) work with gallery curators and artists to develop projects to facilitate the dissemination of such debate amongst the general public; iii) liaise with school teachers in the UK, and particularly London, to use Westminster's Chinese Poster Collection as a resource for the teaching of modern and contemporary China. Since the beginning of 2013, this work has involved collaboration with a scholar based in the Freie University, Berlin, to apply the latest digital archive and internet project management technologies to develop Westminster's Chinese Poster Collection as an interactive online resource accessible to primary school teachers and pupils. Specifically:

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1. Work with schools since 2008 includes lectures to the history department 'A' level students at Portsmouth's Havant College (2008); workshops and guided group study work with Brecknock Primary School Camden, and Chace Community School, MX (2011). Following their visit to the exhibition, and participation in a specifically designed workshop in the exhibition space, Year 6 teachers and pupils from Brecknock, together with Evans, worked on a six week project involving 30 pupils looking at Mao era posters as a window onto the history of modern and contemporary China as part of the Key Stage 2 Curriculum. Pupils have written about their China project in the school newsletter and have put together a school assembly based on the knowledge of China they acquired during the project. Brecknock's Headteacher is now working with Evans on developing an interactive and sustainable online teaching package based on Westminster's Chinese Poster Collection. In the words of Brecknock's Headteacher, "Evans' work has been inspirational to Brecknock, which will now be at the forefront pushing for the inclusion of China in Key Stage 2 teaching and learning, as part of the International Primary Curriculum (IPC)." The success of this project has led to a funding application in collaboration with the Freie University, and current plans to make this online project accessible to schools across Camden will put Camden at the forefront of UK primary schools teaching modern China within the framework of the Key Stage 2 curriculum.

2. The exhibition co-curated by Evans on 'China and Revolution: History, Parody and Memory in Contemporary Art' (University Gallery, Sydney, 2010, and RMIT, Melbourne 2011) was visited by 14,000 people. Many of these visitors attended public talks and workshops organized by the curators, postgraduate students and the artists involved. The show also facilitated the research team's work with visitors, both directly and through visitors' books, to assess the draw of posters as a means of creating a public space for the discussion of difficult and emotionally challenging issues. Over 30 Australian newspaper and media reports and reviews of the exhibition referred to its significance in giving public visibility and legitimacy to discussion of migrants' experiences of the Cultural Revolution.

3. Supported by University and Faculty funds, Evans curated an exhibition titled 'Poster Power: Images of Mao's China, Then and Now' at the University of Westminster in 2011, which was visited by more than 4500 people. In email correspondence, conversations with the curator and media reports, many testified to the impact of the exhibition on questioning standard interpretations of China's social and cultural transformation. Blog reviews of the exhibition posted on The China Beat, one of the most innovative USA-based blogs on contemporary China, are further evidence of the exhibition's challenging appeal.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

- Brecknock Primary School, Camden, London
- Chace Community School, Churchbury Lane, Enfield, EN1 3HQ
- RMIT Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
- Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, Guangzhou, PRC
- The China Beat, <http://www.thechinabeat.org>