

Panel 7

Text-Image: Philosophy, Discourse and Rewritings

Archival Perspectives on Cross-Media Knowledge Formation in 1980s Chinese Art: From Philosophical Translation to Visual Practice

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This study examines the intellectual foundations of 1980s Chinese contemporary art through archival materials from Peking University's Chinese Contemporary Art Archive. By analyzing translated philosophical texts, artists' manuscripts, and correspondences, it reveals how artists constructed a "concept-image" translational system. This framework bridged Western modern philosophy (existentialism and phenomenology) via literary reinterpretation and Chinese traditions (Zhuangzi and Chan Buddhism) through modernist lenses, alongside creative engagements with Lu Xun and Nietzsche.

Archival evidence demonstrates that knowledge production was not passive assimilation but an intermedial network shaped by translation strategies, literary metaphors, and visual experimentation. This process cultivated a "double consciousness", balancing global modernity and indigenous cultural identity. The study reconstructs how Western philosophy was Sinicized through poetic translation, while Chinese thought was revitalized via modern literary frameworks, enabling conceptual transformations into visual forms. Unlike Western intermediality, which focuses on the synthesis of mediums, Chinese artists developed a tripartite model: philosophical concepts, literary metaphors, and visual forms, characterized by bilingual creativity. By decoding the "'85 Art Movement," this research presents an Eastern paradigm of theory-driven modernity, challenging Eurocentric art historiography through China's unique cross-cultural synthesis.

Biography

Tan Wei is a Researcher at Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences and the Executive Director of Peking University's China Contemporary Art Archive. Tan Wei was also a former V&A Museum Assistant Curator. Wei's research fields include art history, cross-domain cultural studies, curatorial studies, museology, and cultural communication.