

EASt invites applications for 1 PhD position in Chinese Studies and Cultural Studies

Application deadline:
15th of May 2018

Environment

This PhD project is envisioned as a joint collaboration between **EASt**, centre for East Asian Studies at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB, Belgium) and **GSAPS**, Waseda University's Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies (Tokyo, Japan). The doctoral thesis will be prepared in both partner institutions under **joint supervision**, and may result in a PhD from the ULB and from Waseda University.

EASt is a research center hosted within the Maison des Sciences Humaines (MSH) of the ULB (<http://msh.ulb.ac.be/equipements/east/>). In **EASt**, this PhD project is part of a wider "ARC" project, "**GENEsYs – East Asian Youth: Identities and Practices in Public Space**". The main objective of this cutting-edge project is to understand how East Asian youth occupy and use public spaces, be they material or digital ones.

GSAPS is an independent graduate school focusing on social sciences and international relations, located on the Waseda Campus of the Waseda University in Tokyo (<https://www.waseda.jp/gsaps/en/>).

Objectives

Digital Culture and Youth Filmmaking in China

This project will explore the impact of digital culture on Chinese film and China's film industry, with a special focus on China's digital generations of filmmakers.

The opportunities offered by digital equipment and techniques (e.g. VCD, DVD, digital cameras and the Internet) have radically changed the way films are made, displayed, perceived and thought. On the one hand, the digital technology and the Internet have allowed for new venues of creation and distribution that dramatically transformed the filmic experience, expanding the trajectory of cinematic practice. Films can now be viewed collectively or individually, on big and small screens, at a time and place chosen by the viewer. Such new practices challenge the overall assumptions of what it means to watch a film. Besides, cinema is increasingly reconceptualised as one of many platforms available within a broader visual culture.

On the other hand, the characteristics of digital cinema (software, processes and equipment) have transformed the cinematic language, allowing for new aesthetic, stylistic modes and narrative forms. Digital films therefore become sites of experimentation and innovation with, for instance, new premises based on other familiar audio-visual forms such as computer games and interface or music videos. The visual and artistic engagement of digital cinema with other media gives new perspectives on what cinema is, and how stories can be told. Not only did light, affordable and readily available digital equipment allowed for new voices to emerge, but they also created, with the help of the Internet, a cooperative relationship between filmmakers and audiences.

In China, for the past two decades, the digital technology has been a creative and ground-breaking partner that has increasingly shaped the ways films are made and conceived. However, digital culture in China is often portrayed as limited and closely monitored in terms of information access and cultural representations, thus overlooking Chinese filmmakers and audiences' effective appropriation of digital technology and culture to create meaningful relation, and often opposition, to dominant political discourses and ideologies.

Youth are particularly active in the process of changing Chinese film culture and industry. Unhindered by the anxiety about the transition to a digital age, Chinese "e-Generations" are prompt to experiment and reinvent the moving image



culture in China. In the burgeoning Chinese independent cinema scene, for instance, most radical changes are operated by the digital generations of filmmakers that include a growing number of women, ethnic minority and other film directors who previously had very few venues for expression and creation. As the digital technology allows them to bypass official production and distribution channels, Chinese young filmmakers tend to be more adventurous in terms of style, content and storytelling; in this context, they greatly participate in the transformation of filmic industry in China. Meanwhile, DIY (Do it yourself) young filmmakers, empowered by online platforms, offer rare insights on youth culture in contemporary Chinese society.

With this in mind, this doctoral project will take the digital generation of filmmakers as a main focus.

Possible questions are:

- with technological growth, non-professionals are increasingly engaging in filmmaking and distribution: how is this changing the film industry in China? How is digital culture changing working practices?
- how does Chinese cinema reinvent itself as a trans-media culture, including other existing digital media forms (online literature, online gaming, cellfix, webspooofs etc.)?
- Digital and online culture has enabled new young Internet celebrities to arise (bloggers, online writers etc.): how do they contribute to the development of new directions in China's film industry? Conversely, what can actors in China's film industry learn from these young tastemakers?
- how does digital cinema become meaningful (or not) for cultural and national identity building amongst Chinese youth?
- how do these transformation help making Chinese films more accessible to national or global audiences, through the Internet and fan culture?

This call for projects is intentionally broad in scope and open-ended to encourage a variety of innovative proposals that meets the objective of understanding how digital culture transforms Chinese cinema.

Supervisors:

- Prof. Vanessa FRANGVILLE, vanessa.frangville@ulb.ac.be.

Faculty of Lettres, Translation and Communication: <https://www.ulb.ac.be/ulb/presentation/ltc.html>

- Prof. Seio NAKAJIMA, seionakajima@gmail.com

Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies: <https://www.waseda.jp/gsaps/en/about/faculty/nakajima-seio/>

Any question pertaining to this post and related application process are to be directed via e-mail to both supervisors.

Post Description

Hiring Institution:

Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Brussels, Belgium (as main institution)

Duration of the research:

36 months (October 2018- October 2021), with a possible extension to 48 months and even 60 months. The fellow is expected to arrive in Brussels and start his/her research before the end of September 2018.

Funding of the research;

The selected fellow will be awarded a one-year (12 months) starting grant provided for through internal ULB funding. As such, the first year of research is fully covered. In an effort to extend the duration of the funded research to the maximum 60 month, the fellow will upon selection be held to apply for a Belgian National Research Council (F.R.S-Fnrs) PhD-grant (i.e. Research Fellow/ASP) before February 2019.

Income:

The starting grant covers a gross amount of 34.500€ spread over the initial 12 months. Said starting grant will be paid out in monthly instalments at a gross income of about 2900€ which corresponds to an average net income of about 1900€. Please note that a Fellow's individual net income after Social Security Contributions can vary in light of their nationality, family status and antecedents.



Requirements

Degree:

Top-level graduate degree (Master or equivalent) providing access to PhD programmes in Chinese studies. The Master degree should be no older than 2 years old at the time of application.

Nationality:

There is no requirement on nationality but the candidate must settle in Brussels within a month after the beginning of the contract.

Language:

Proficiency in written and spoken English is required.

Knowledge, or willingness to learn French, is a plus.

Proficiency in written and spoken Chinese is required for position 1; a good command of Japanese is also preferred.

How to apply

Candidates must send their applications **as a single PDF file** to the PhD supervisors (vanessa.frangville@ulb.ac.be and seionakajima@gmail.com), no later than 15th of May 2018(17:00 CET).

Applications must include:

- A letter of introduction (statement of motivation and personal interpretation of the research project);
- A full academic CV, including the name and contact details of two academic referees (we may contact your referees during the application process);
- An academic record with copies of diplomas and transcripts for BA and MA.

Key Dates

By 15th of May 2018: Candidates must send their applications to the relevant supervisors.

6-9th of June 2018: Shortlisted candidates will be invited to do a Skype interview with their supervisors.

15th of June 2018: Shortlisted candidates will be informed about final decision.