



Part of Dr. Shiyu Gao's Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship research project, *Emerging Surveillance Culture*, which explores the intersection of expanded media art and technology in the context of 'digital China'. Designed by Dr. Gao, based on the popularity of social networks worldwide.

Call for Papers

The 18th CCVA Annual Conference

The Art of Chinese Social Media

Date: 6-7 November 2025

Location: Birmingham City University

Deadline for abstracts: 18 April 2025

With the rise of Chinese digital platforms and social media, a new landscape of visual cultural production and artistic communication has emerged, reshaping the ways of art making and aesthetics, the cultures and politics of display, and stimulating new participatory approaches in diversity. From the early days of bulletin board systems (BBS) like 'Shui Mu Tsing Hua' (1995) to the proliferation of platforms like WeChat (2011), Douyin (2016)/TikTok (2017), Kuaishou (2011), Weibo (2009), QQ (1999), and Xiaohongshu (Rednote) (2013), Chinese social media have become a vital site for artistic expression, community engagement, and political discourse. The development of social media entangled with critical issues of gender, LGBTQ+, ethnicity, and identities has broadened the

boundaries of existing concepts of contemporary art and visual culture, providing new methods, conditions and aesthetics.

The rapidly evolving social media with ‘Chinese characteristics’ has facilitated a wave of contemporary Chinese art and visual culture in various forms with key representations including Zhang Peili, Miao Ying, Cao Fei, Ge Yulu, Lin Ke, Jiao Xingtao, Huang Sunquan, and many others. This phenomenon extends into the wider context of visual culture, including the global popularity and impact of short videos and reels, emerging online exhibitions on platforms like WeChat during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, and the vibrant feminists and queer activism across different social media. Visual production by influencers and ordinary users is transforming the intersection of art, commerce, and digital culture. Furthermore, mass participatory dissent, demonstrations and other creative strategies are engaging deeply with the social, political, and cultural contexts of China and beyond.

This conference seeks to explore artistic strategies, visual cultures, and essential issues, such as ontological questions, aesthetic implications, socio-political dimensions, and ethical concerns, arising from Chinese social media. These include creative experiments produced *for, by, and of* Chinese social media. How do platforms like Weibo, Douyin/TikTok, and WeChat construct new forms of artistic practice and cultural expression within the age of ‘digital China’? In what ways do contemporary artists and diverse communities remediate social media to challenge power asymmetries and foster digital democratisation through reclaiming agency and individual empowerment?

The conference welcomes contributions that can develop disciplinary perspectives and critical inquiries on the art and aesthetics of Chinese social media in the fields of visual arts, digital media, design, performing arts, social science, cultural studies, and beyond.

Possible themes include but are not limited to:

- **Artistic and curatorial practices responding to/being stimulated by Chinese social media**
- **Visual culture and aesthetics of Chinese social media**
- **Theoretical and art-historical exploration of Chinese social media**
- **Identity and self-representation**
- **Online propaganda and media democracy**
- **Censorship, surveillance, and artistic resistance**
- **Gender and queer issues entangled with social media**
- **Influencers and digital creators as artists**
- **Ecology of social media**
- **Distinct strategies and practices between Chinese social media and platforms in other regions**

Please submit one single document (in English) with the subject ‘CCVA Conference 2025’, containing 1) an abstract of up to 300 words; 2) a 100-word biography, contact information and any institutional affiliation by 18 April 2025 to [Dr. Shiyu Gao \(shiyu.gao@bcu.ac.uk\)](mailto:Dr. Shiyu Gao (shiyu.gao@bcu.ac.uk)) copying in ccva@bcu.ac.uk and [Professor Jiang Jiehong \(joshuajiang@bcu.ac.uk\)](mailto:Professor Jiang Jiehong (joshuajiang@bcu.ac.uk)). Selected conference papers will be invited for full development for peer-reviewed publication in the *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, indexed by Scopus.

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