

Celebrating the International, Disremembering Shanghai: The Curious Case of the Shanghai International Film Festival

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Abstract

The state-sanctioned *Shanghai International Film Festival* (SIFF) is the only film festival accredited by the *Fédération Internationale des Associations de Producteurs de Films* (FIAPF) in the Greater China region. This paper intends to explore the perceived paradoxes of the SIFF by approaching its vaguely defined vision of “being international/internationalization” (or *guojihua*). The vision of *guojihua* has, at best, fuelled the persistent efforts of the SIFF to emulate the globally standardized festival framework and redirect the global capital flow into its newly installed film market. On the other hand, the SIFF has been reluctant to use one of its most precious cultural legacies – the cosmopolitanism of the Republican era – as a branding resource. The main argument is that the weakened connection between the SIFF and its locality/cultural memory is not only a result of the superficial understanding of *guojihua*, but also of the fact that the central and the local government often hold conflicting ideas regarding the social engineering of Shanghai’s image.

Keywords: Shanghai International Film Festival (SIFF), festival programming, “being international/internationalization” (*guojihua*), global city, cosmopolitanism

The Birth of SIFF: Achieving International Recognition

The Shanghai International Film Festival (SIFF) was established in 1993 under the supervision of the Film Bureau of the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT), the municipal government of Shanghai, and its co-hosting organizers, including the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture, Radio, Film & TV and the Shanghai Media & Entertainment Group (SMEG, *Shanghai Wenguang Chuanmei Jituan*).¹ Between 1993 and 2003, the SIFF was conducted as a biennial event. However, the festival has been held annually since its 7th edition in 2004. Since 1986, the steering committee of the SIFF has shared its administrative staff with the Shanghai TV Festival (*Shanghai Dianshijie* or STVF) under the Office of Major International Events (*Guoji Daxinghuodong Ban'gongshi*) of the SMEG. It is within this marketized or commercialized cultural terrain that film festivals or exhibitions of similar nature were first introduced into the PRC, specifically in the Northeastern city Changchun in Jilin Province as well as the coastal city Zhuhai in Guangdong Province, which launched their film festivals in 1992 and 1994 respectively. In the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen incident, which gave rise to the re-territorialization of the PRC's socio-cultural and economic scenario as well as the Party-state's unequivocal emphasis upon economic development, cultural industries in the PRC was "for the first time, placed on the front lines of economic restructuring" (McGrath 2008: 3). Although I would be hesitant in labelling post-1989 China as "neoliberal" or consider the status quo "neoliberalism-in-disguise," Ong and Zhang's viewpoints concerning the neoliberal condition in postsocialist China are useful in grasping the socio-economic scenario within which the SIFF came into being. They argue that, "the cross between privatization and socialist rule is not a 'deviant' form but a particular articulation of neoliberalism, which we call 'socialism from afar.'" Refuting claims that "socialist rule is dead in China" or that "China is becoming a variant of Western models of neoliberalism," they posit that "postsocialism in China denotes a reanimation of state socialism realized through a strategy of ruling from afar" (Ong & Zhang 2008: 4).

Indeed, the timing of the SIFF's establishment coincided with several pivotal events in PRC's economic reform history. Early in the spring of 1992, Deng Xiaoping's *Southern Tour* and his many speeches outlined the Party's guidelines for implementing economic reform. Deng's speeches "signalled a new, more friendly political climate for rapid capital accumulation and the development of mass consumption." In addition, "this new biopolitical regime de-totalized socialist society by reconfiguring socialist power in relation to self-enterprising powers" (Ong & Zhang 2008: 14). As McGrath argues, "in the Fourteenth Party Congress later in 1992, the 'socialist market economy' became the official label for the new organization of social resources, and various policies were instituted to extend market reforms to new areas of the economy" (2008: 3). Following these state-

ments, it is not surprising that in 1993, a crucial policy was launched to facilitate the commercialization of China's film industry.

This was guided by the specific aim of dissolving the existing stiff industrial hierarchy, with only the notorious China Film Group Corporation (or CFGC, *Zhongying Jituan Gongsi*)² in charge of the distribution of all domestically produced feature films. At the same time it placed increased emphasis on the economic potential of the film industry. During the subsequent wave of emulating foreign film festivals in Mainland China at Changchun and Zhuhai – both of which failed – local governments tended to equate a film festival to any other cultural event/showcase that could help boost the local cultural industry and bring potential economic profit. Organizers and policy/decision-makers have failed to realize that a film festival is not just any cultural event that can be quickly and easily installed and staged. Simply imitating the bare format of a film festival ignores the cultural-historical depth out of which this specific cultural institution emerges, just as the “cinophilia” dimension of the film festival is often times least taken into account. Held in a socialist state, which has been intensively incorporated into the global capitalist market, a Chinese film festival itself constitutes an intriguing text through which we can observe how the different parties in the power structure contest with each other as they find their relations being reconfigured.

Let's switch focus to the global terrain. In the 1990s, film festivals, featuring a wide spectrum of themes as well as cultural and political orientations, proliferated throughout the world. De Valck calls this historical stage of film festival development “the third period,” during which “the festival phenomenon is sweepingly professionalized and institutionalized” (2007: 20). The establishment of the major film festivals in China in the early 1990s could be regarded as part of this global festival wave. Nevertheless, the Chinese film festivals, with their own ideological constraints and operational forbidden zones, at that time still lagged behind the more mature film festivals with regard to international influence. Commenting on the Kalovy Vary International Film Festival, which originated in the former socialist state of Czechoslovakia in 1946, Iordanova evinces that “profitability was not the key concern of the state socialist management of culture” (2006: 27). Her comment is not outmoded at all if applied to the film festival economy of PRC. Despite the transformation of the regulatory climate in the 1990s, for the SIFF and other domestic film festivals, profitability is not actually prioritized. The State still firmly supervises and controls the operations and functions of these cultural events as its regulation and intervention take up seemingly diverse forms. For example, sponsors and commercial partners have been sought to fund the Shanghai festival but still the organization committee typically consists of government officials, whose presence is deemed necessary to guarantee that the film festival is orchestrated within the guidelines delineated by the CCP authorities. The birth of the SIFF was partially accelerated by the acknowledgment of the Fifth Generation

filmmakers in the world film community at major Western film festivals—a recognition gained from victories attained in prestigious film awards abroad. In boosting national pride, the success of the Fifth Generation led the Chinese to believe they are capable of playing an active role in developing global film culture by hosting an international film festival.

Upon its establishment, the SIFF was quickly accredited by the *Fédération Internationale des Associations de Producteurs de Films*, (FIAPF, est. 1933) during its 1993 convention at the Cannes Film Festival. This accreditation proved to be the first crucial step, which allowed the SIFF to gain international recognition. According to the FIAPF's chief executive:

To receive a FIAPF accreditation, a new festival must first show evidence of compliance with the standards laid out in the FIAPF regulations for international film festivals. [...] New applicants first receive affiliate status for an initial period of two years, during which their commitment to the regulations is assessed. (qtd. in Iordanova 2006: 29)

Classified as one of the 12 A-category film festivals, including the most prestigious ones (e.g., Cannes, Berlin, and Venice), the SIFF was initially doubted by the international community with regards to its mysterious accreditation and classification as an A-festival. Undoubtedly, the FIAPF's A-festival standards and regulations have served as a means of upgrading the SIFF and thus enhancing its leading status in Chinese-language film communities. At the same time, the high-profile accreditation has also shrouded SIFF with the grandeur of simply “being international” (*guojihua*).

At the 6th SIFF held in 2002, Phyllis Mollet, Director of the Communications and Film Festivals of the FIAPF, emphasized in an interview with the Chinese media that an A-festival only indicated a category, rather than a ranking that guaranteed superiority (2002). As Iordanova explains, “An A-festival must run for at least nine days; it should not specialize but should cover all aspects of filmmaking; [and] a feature competition with at least fourteen films without genre limitations is a requirement” (2006: 28). All of these seemed rather neutral and feasible targets.

Nonetheless, if we examine the 76-year history of FIAPF, it is easy to see that the A-category has been originally associated with the hierarchy and level of recognition involved in tradition-entrenched international film festivals. For example, classified as category A festivals at an earlier stage, the Cannes and Venice film festivals were given “the right to form an international jury for their prestigious awards” (de Valck 2007: 54). Meanwhile, the accreditation policy for the FIAPF's film festivals has been intricately related to changes in regional geopolitics and global political climate. Later on, the FIAPF revised its much controversial and outmoded A-category into a more technically worded, “Competition Feature Film Festivals.” Despite this change, the SIFF still utilizes its “A-festival” status in promotional campaigns in recent years. However, in 2002, FIAPF's Mollet acknowledged that SIFF was still young compared with both Venice and

Cannes; she also pointed out several aspects that compromised the festival's A-category status, such as the negligible number of foreign press, the disappointing number of screened Chinese films, the bleak scene of empty seats during screenings, and recurring problems with English subtitles, to name a few (2002).

Putting the "Big Three" and SIFF's tricky association with FIAPF's "A-list" aside, parallels could be drawn between the SIFF and the international film festivals at Kalovy Vary (est. 1946) and Moscow (est. 1959). Both were established in the Cold War Era and underwent respective transformations since the 1990s, which coincided with a drastically changed social and political climate. According to de Valck, when the film festival in Moscow was established in 1959, "the Soviet diplomatic dominance became apparent once more" for the Moscow festival "was immediately granted 'A' category status by the FIAPF," and eventually, "the political decision to offer only one 'A' festival annually in the communist countries soon followed" (2007: 57). Iordanova posits that as one of the oldest film festivals in the world "over the cold war period," the Kalovy Vary fest "was one of the key cultural events in the Soviet sphere, distributing a number of politically correct awards and attracting a host of 'progressive' international film-makers" (2008: 26). Iordanova's inquiry into Kalovy Vary's rivalry with a Prague-based film festival (the Golden Golem) for FIAPF's "A-category" approval in the post-communist Czech Republic and her interpretation of Kalovy Vary's final victory offer insights in examining the dynamic nature of China's film festivals. Iordanova reads the showdown between Kalovy Vary and Prague as a rivalry of cultural entrepreneurship, which is a result of the State giving up the centralized management of culture. She perceptively argues that "the real battle was not one between art and commerce nor between refined tradition and disrespectful free enterprise...the battle was between two events that depended almost entirely on commercial sponsors in a callous *laissez-faire* environment where the government, previously controlling, was seeking a way out" (2006: 32).

Nevertheless in the case of the SIFF, the sociopolitical climate could be better described as "postsocialist" but definitely not yet "post-communist." Upon its inception, the SIFF has become the only festival held in a socialist nation among the 12 former A-list film festivals. However, as a cultural event primarily envisioned as the rejuvenation of the splendid film culture and cinematic legacy of Shanghai, the SIFF actually operates in a bizarre hybrid logic of postsocialism, inhabiting the gray areas between the centralized will of the Party-state, a range of ideology-laden and ambiguously-termed cultural policies, and the discourse of the new millennium's cosmopolitan Shanghai indexing China's ambition to reinstate itself into the global economy (Abbas 2000: 779).

The Global City of Shanghai: SIFF as the Symptom

In this section, I will further critique the “international” vision of SIFF by discussing the notion of a Cosmopolitan Shanghai and the city’s aspiration to be a self-made “Global City,” rivalling other global hubs such as New York, Tokyo, London, and Hong Kong. The SIFF’s obsession with internationalization or *guojihua* parallels the prevalent and somehow clichéd discourse of globalization (*quan-qihua*), in which the challenges faced by postsocialist modernity are presented as a global socioeconomic condition (see McGrath 2008). In light of Abbas’ arguments about the cosmopolitanism of both Shanghai and Hong Kong, such a yearning for *guojihua* registers a rather more superficial understanding of that cosmopolitanism associated with the former city’s pre-1949 historical status as the unusual site of colonial extraterritoriality (Abbas 2000: 774).

In an interview with SINA.COM.CN, the Vice Executive Secretary General of the SIFF Organizing Committee, Tang Lijun (also a government official of Shanghai), admitted that their articulation of “being international” was a bit ambiguous. Instead she suggested that they considered “diversification” (*duoyuan*) as an interchangeable term, which was no less fuzzily defined by the spokeswoman. However, Tang managed to outline the standards of “being international.” First, the competition films come from various countries; second, at the SIFF, there are many levels for the training of new film talent, because they are selected globally (in addition, the films selected for the student film competition also come from all over the world); third, there are many countries participating in the film projects’ “Catch & Pitch,” as well as the market of film co-production; and finally, the stars participating in the film festival are from both China and overseas (Tang 2009). This definition simply identifies *guojihua* with a cultural event in which “many countries” participate; however, this is a kind of naiveté that shrinks the global dimension of the SIFF to its mere face value.

In his research on the film festival phenomenon and global cities, Stringer proposes that “while the establishment of events like Berlin, Cannes and Venice in the postwar period signalled that the balance of power was shifting in the new world order, the rise of film festivals on a global scale since the 1980s is implicated, too, in the restructuring of an alternative social object, namely the modern city” (2002: 136). Considering the film festival circuit as an inherently hierarchical configuration, Stringer contends that the circuit itself is regulated through the rivalry and competition existing among individual film festivals. Moreover, this rejuvenation has also been achieved through the establishment of new film festivals. For Stringer, “the international film festival circuit” suggests the “existence of a socially produced space unto itself,” which constitutes “a unique cultural arena that acts as a contact zone for the working-through of unevenly differentiated power relationships,” while cities rather than national film industries “act as nodal points on this circuit” (2002: 138). Further, he believes that many film festivals that “aspire to the status of a global event,” would do so “both through the implementa-

tion of their programming strategies and through the establishment of an international reach and reputation.”

When the host cities of film festivals had identified rivalry logic as such, they would compete or cooperate with each other “at a variety of different levels on the basis of a range of differing administrative, governmental, and cultural and political activist concerns” (Stinger 2002: 139). To further contextualize Stringer’s arguments, it is easy to see why the Hong Kong International Film Festival, widely considered as the most competitive rival of the Busan International Film Festival regionally, has introduced flagship events, such as the ‘Film Market’ and ‘Asian Film Awards’, in recent editions by referring to the HKSAR government’s vision of Hong Kong as “Asia’s World City.” Moreover, it has also repackaged its vision as the main promoter of Chinese-language cinema directly competing against Busan’s bid to be considered as “The Hub of Asian Cinema.”

As for Shanghai, the latest officially endorsed volumes, entitled *Shanghai, the Transformation of the City And its Prospects* (Zhou 2010), were published to coincide with the Shanghai 2010 World Expo. Cited in the publication was the desire of local urban planners, researchers, and policy-makers to position the city within a horizontal framework comparable to other global hubs, such as New York, Tokyo, Hong Kong, and London. This can be accomplished by addressing the gaps and suggesting directions for its grand transformation (*shanbian*). Furthermore, it was proposed in the post Reform & Opening-up era—30 years after the policy was initiated in 1978—that Shanghai should be developed into a “Global City” (*Quanqiu Chengshi*). The authors explained that their vision of such a model was built upon the theoretical underpinnings of Saskia Sassen, John Friedman’s “World City,” and other scholars, such as Manuel Castells and Bruno Latour (Zhou 2010: 1–7). The think tanks of Shanghai’s entrepreneurial municipal government continue their assertion of the city as China’s future economic, financial, and trading powerhouse. Their formulation of such a “global city” as represented by an international film festival features a full spectrum of cultural events enhancing the city’s competitiveness (2010: 7). Having said this, I strongly agree with Berry’s reflections on regional film festivals in Asia (Berry 2011). Berry states that within the paradigm of the global city, we could develop further Sassen’s sub-categories of global cities that are not only or at all global centres of finance and capital concentration, and add “global cinema cities,” as exemplified in the case of Busan, Cannes, or Venice. Berry further contends that international film festivals play a crucial role in networking such global cities together, thus echoing Stringer’s arguments as mentioned earlier (2011).

People tend to resort to, and indeed switch between, two different critical lenses when approaching the pros and cons of the SIFF. First, the festival is contextualized within the world film festival system; second, they read the SIFF as a symptom of Shanghai’s ambition to emerge as one of the global hubs and so demonstrate the nation’s rising economy. The SIFF itself regards the accreditation by

FIAPF as adequate criteria for legitimizing its international status. Still, people attempt to examine its degree of internationalization in these two ways. First, they juxtapose it with the more prestigious festivals held at Cannes, Berlin, Venice, and Busan. Second, they scrutinize whether or not the film festival matches up to an ideal projection of 'cosmopolitan Shanghai'.

In the news commentary from the weblog, *China Herald*, entitled *Can Shanghai Host an International Event?*, blogger Fons Tuinstra complains about how messy it could be when Chinese megacities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, host real international events (2008). Using the 11th SIFF in 2008 as an example of China's attempt to showcase its capability to impress the world with an international gala, Tuinstra lamented that the film festival was not international at all. The evidence included the presence of few international new agencies and representatives, except for the *Hollywood Reporter* (which in 2009 cooperated with the SIFF in publishing its official festival daily). Tuinstra, however, was wrong because in the Shanghai festival in 2008, *Variety* indeed sent in their film critic, Derek Elley, to review several Chinese film titles.

Somehow, when the prestige of an international film festival is proportionally related to the international press attending the event, the SIFF would not be as confident or as eager to disclose the number of its foreign journalists as it would for the red carpet eye-candies. At the same time, except for the film festival's online media collaborator SOHU.COM, most leading media in China (such as SOHU's competitor SINA.COM.CN) are not quite comfortable with the slow progress of the SIFF in recent years. Those media outlets frequently send out teams covering film festivals at Cannes, Venice, and Berlin around the festival calendar. This gap between the Chinese festival and its overseas counterparts is too obvious to ignore, and the sarcastic voices regarding the festival's disqualification never seem to tone down. Many aspects provided ammunition to criticize the SIFF. At the closing of the 11th SIFF, *China Daily* came out with a concluding commentary entitled *Shanghai Film Fest a Far Cry from Cannes*. As stated in the commentary, "Cannes makes a name for its festival based on reliability; Berlin sets itself apart for its devotion to pushing serious films; and Venice is known for welcoming aspiring art hopefuls. In Asia, there is strong government support behind the Pusan film festival, but it is the retrospective screening session of Hong Kong's festival that is still the best on the continent." The article cites the Taiwanese film producer and promoter of Chinese independent cinema, Peggy Chiao who states that "Shanghai is one of the most concerned cities in the world, which works for hosting a film festival... but, who you are is important. All successful film festivals have their distinctive orientations" (China Daily 2008). Based on the above, the arguments in this current paper can be extended to the problems of SIFF's programming, which is a crucial indicator of a film festival's self-positioning and identity. The festival officials also agree that this is regrettably unclear and superficial – as shown in their inner circulated documents (SMEG

2006: 17). What may have complicated the discussion are the SIFF's postsocialist idiosyncrasies, especially when relevant official data and documents, both concerning the festival programming strategies and the city's urban/culture policies, are not accessible nor transparent.

Marijke de Valck, ruminating on the Rotterdam International Film Festival, writes, "From roughly 1971 onwards, programming became the core business of film festivals worldwide. The format of the showcase of national cinemas was abandoned and, instead of a National Film Funds, the film festivals took it upon themselves to select films for the festival screenings." Accordingly, "the programmers focused on established auteurs, new discoveries (such as new waves in national cinemas), and/or the film-historical canon" (de Valck 2007: 167). Nevertheless, the SIFF has no officially appointed director or programmers who would enjoy autonomy in their work as delineated by de Valck. Even if they participated in the programming, their names cannot be disclosed to the public for unknown reasons. As illustrated previously, the SIFF's Organizing Committee (hereafter called OC) predominantly consists of CPC officials/cadres.³

In an interview with SINA.COM.CN, spokeswoman Tang Lijun explained the festival's programming section's functions and admitted that there were behind-the-scene programmers. According to Tang, the SIFF has a team of around 10 people responsible for selecting films submitted worldwide for the first round mainly through "group discussion." The team members come from various backgrounds, including industry people, film critics, journalists, and others working in related fields. The festival itself also has several young professionals as full-time employees, who are responsible for scouting and programming films. However, these scouts have no say in acquiring any film unless the order is clearly delivered from the higher-ranked officials.⁴ Apart from these professionals, the SIFF has consultants from Asia, Europe, and America who recommend films to the OC. Overseas companies, such as Germany's *Universum Film A.G.* (UFA), Italy's *Cinecittà*, and the *Korean Film Council* (KOFIC), have also kept close ties with the film festival. Nevertheless, according to an anonymous interviewee familiar with the programming flow, despite the work of the programming team, domestically hired professional people still do not have the final say in including/excluding a certain film at the SIFF either.⁵

When asked what the SIFF's programming rationales are, its spokeswoman provided an outline of the OC's rationale by saying that first, they select films that maintain the delicate balance between commercial and artistic merits, and second, they encourage innovation and actively promote young filmmakers. However, such vague and evasive descriptions have not really underscored anything idiosyncratic about the festival's programming vision, which has been directly reflected in the unconvincing program structure.⁶ What may further undermine the international vision of the SIFF is that, despite its high-profile "Industrial Forum" attracting guests from other Asian film industries, such as Singapore, Thailand,

Japan and South Korea, the festival has been slow to include groundbreaking new films from these regions.⁷ It is my speculation that the SIFF relies on a line-up of Euro-American films, rather than new Asian films, to highlight its international profile. This suggests that the festival remains ambiguous about its self-positioning within both the regional and the global film festival scenario. Such a preference is also evidenced by the official stance as indicated in the inner-circulated official document, that the SIFF is to be developed into an equal to the film festivals at Berlin and Venice – but not the Busan International Film Festival that is renowned for its Asian titles, for instance (see the Five Year Plan – SMEG 2006) (though in recent editions the SIFF has been trying to install more sidebar events on Asian films). Furthermore, what has hindered the flexibility of programming is the state regulation of the film industry with regards overseas entries for Chinese film festivals, which is briefly delineated in Item No. 35 of the Administration of Films Regulations.⁸ This indicates that all overseas films brought to the festival must be evaluated and sanctioned by the SARFT. Overall the perceived lack of prestige, both culturally and economically, hardly gets the SIFF any competitive world premiere. In a concluding festival report on the 12th SIFF (2009), which was based on random questionnaires distributed among the Chinese journalists and critics participating in the festival, journalists of SINA.COM.CN audaciously challenged the SIFF by stating that there were “no films but only a festival” (Zhao 2009). As repeatedly critiqued by both domestic film professionals and audiences, it is ridiculous that the SIFF is not known for its selection of new Chinese films and instead, consistently presents an eclectic bunch of European titles produced in recent years. These, according to Berry, are not going to “set the world on fire” (Berry 2009).⁹

Film critic Mark Peranson demarcates between two models of film – business and audience festivals (Peranson 2008). In turn, this has led Berry (2011) to argue that Peranson’s formulation of a business festival can be used to analyse the SIFF – in particular, the strategic role of the SIFF in inscribing the Chinese film industry and its marketing into a global film/media network. Despite its cinephilia undercurrents,¹⁰ however, the Shanghai festival tends to prioritize its film market and role in networking film professionals and facilitating deals with transnational film co-productions. This explains why the programming is not (and indeed cannot be) considered an organic part of the SIFF and why its “international reach and reputation” are not dependent on the line-up of the films but more often integrated into the trite discourse of the nation or the city’s amazing growth. For the Chinese authorities, it is the city that would lend the festival the “marketable trademark or brand image,” as Stringer terms it. However, the film festival is subject to the State’s influence; thus, it cannot attain its own identity and assume autonomy. This underlines the reason why the SIFF is perceived as lacking prestige and authority, which is also reflected in its rather neutral programming strategies (if such strategies exist). As if to testify to the business logic of the festival, the SIFF has

placed much emphasis on nourishing and branding its own film market in recent years. Mainland China, despite its systematic imperfections and the rigid Party-state regulation, is highly regarded as an alluring film market and potential shooting location with regards to its gargantuan population and an open policy towards transnational capital flows.

In its inner circulated file, “On the Brand naming Strategies and Positioning of SIFF” (*Shilun Shanghaiguojidianyingjie De Pinpaizhanlue Yu Dingwei*, 2006), with Tang Lijun as one of its authors, the festival also considered the monopoly of the China Film Group Corporation in acquiring and purchasing foreign films as a considerable barrier preventing the SIFF from nurturing its own film market. In 2006, with a structure based on the former Sino-European Co-production Film Forum, the *Co-production Film Pitch and Catch* (known as Co-FPC) was established, with the aim of executing co-production opportunities globally. A total of 32 projects were selected by the SIFF for pitching in every edition ever since. In 2007, the SIFF integrated the *China Film Pitch and Catch* (known as CFPC) into its film market, with the aim of “promoting rising Chinese filmmakers.” Different from the Co-FPC, the CFPC even included a presentation session for its eight chosen projects. During this session, the filmmakers and producers pitched their ideas in front of a jury and a selection of industry people for 15–20 minutes. This was followed by a discussion session with the jury members, after which the audience members were allowed to ask questions.

However with the legitimization of independent films in the PRC since 2004, it became possible for independently-produced films to obtain permits from the SARFT, lightly referred to as the “Dragon Trademark,”¹¹ and distribute/exhibit their films at domestic cinemas. Thus, it may not be coincidental that since 2004, the SIFF has set up its *Asian New Talent Award* incorporating legitimized Chinese independent (indie) titles such as *South of the Cloud* (*Yun de nanfang*, 2004; Dir. Zhu Wen; the 7th SIFF), *The Silent Holy Stone* (*Jingjing de Manishi*, 2005; Dir. Wanmacaidan; the 9th SIFF), *Trouble Makers* (*Guangrong de Fennu*, 2006; Dir. Cao Baoping; the 9th SIFF), *The Bliss* (*Fusheng*, 2006; Dir. Shengzhimin; the 10th SIFF), *Jalainur* (*Zhalainuo'er*, 2008; Dir. Zhao Ye; the 12th SIFF), and *Mr. Tree* (*Shuxiansheng*; Dir. Han Jie; the 14th SIFF). Independent filmmakers have been highly visible at various aspects of festival events, such as forums, symposiums, and even the pitch forum of CFPC. This has proven to be a convenient option allowing Chinese indie filmmakers to get involved in the festival even though their films are absent from the festival itself.¹² In this way, the SIFF is also following the stance of international film festivals in discovering young film talents and cultivating their dedication and passion for their craft (see also Elsaesser 2005).

Furthermore, the pervading business talk during the festivals is essentially related to Shanghai’s drastic socio-economic transformations. This is highlighted by the remarkable success achieved by Pudong since the 1990s, which according to Abbas “comes into being before our eyes like the speeded-up image of [a] time-

lapse film.” In understanding the rationale behind Shanghai’s developmental projects for cultural modernization, Abbas relates his personal experience of visiting the Shanghai Museum, during which he marveled more at how “meticulously clean” the museum was than at the rare collections it houses. He then jokingly assumes that “the dirtier the streets around it, the cleaner the museum.” According to Abbas, the Shanghai museum “does not think of itself as being part of a local space at all, but as part of a virtual global cultural network.” Therefore, he proposes that the Shanghai museum also becomes the locale “where Shanghai shows itself off in its museum, with its image cleaned up and in hopes that the world is looking” (2000: 782). Although not necessarily a perfect association, the SIFF indeed represents such a non-place whose *guojihua* reveals the tendency of thinking of itself “as part of a virtual global cultural network,” thus explaining why the line-up of mostly non-Chinese films at the SIFF would be compatible with the yearly updated configuration of film festival sidebars and pitch projects modeled after other global festivals. In particular, the red carpet ceremony is staged every year for the possible viewing of a global audience – perhaps, not only to offer the films, but also to showcase the city itself, reminding us of Abbas’ perception that, Shanghai, as the city of remake, is “a shot-by-shot reworking of a classic, with the latest technology, a different cast, and a new audience.” At the same time, however, the SIFF offers an intriguing example illustrating how self-contradictory it can be when a film festival has the ambition to appear “international” while at the same time holding ambiguous attitudes towards one of its most precious cultural legacies underpinned by both unprecedented internationalism and cosmopolitanism. I shall address these perceived “aporias and anomalies” in the following section.

The SIFF and the Cinematic City

There is a deeper conflict between Shanghai’s past and present cinematic preferences, despite the SIFF OC’s efforts to glamorize this connection in the officials’ celebratory rhetoric. Actually, it was only during the inaugural opening of the SIFF in 1993 that recognition was given to Shanghai Cinema. This includes Chinese film classics from the 1930s, such as Fei Mu’s *Spring of a Small Town* (*Xiaocheng zhichun*, 1948) and Wu Yonggang’s *The Goddess* (*Nv Shen*, 1934), together with the post-1949 gems produced by the Shanghai Film Studio, such as *Women Demon Human* (*Renguiqing*, dir. Huang Shuqin, 1987), *Hibiscus Town* (*Furongzhen*, 1986) by Xie Jin, and *My Memories of Old Beijing* (*Chengnan Jiushi*, 1982) by Wu Yigong. However, except for the occasional retrospectives of the SIFF to honor the earlier generation of filmmakers, “Shanghai” as a keyword has hardly appeared in the keynote sidebars. Such a programming record can easily be overshadowed by the rich and diverse line-up of classic Shanghai films at the exhibitions of both the Hong Kong Film Archive and Hong Kong International

Film Festival. Furthermore, despite the yearly SIFF screening of the new films produced by the Shanghai Film Group Co., Ltd (i.e., *Shanghai Dianying Jituan*, which is part of the gargantuan group SMEG), they are neither collectively showcased in a section called “Shanghai Panorama,” nor are they singled out to highlight their localized aesthetics and sentiments. SIFF’s abandonment of the city’s cinematic tradition signifies the desire to situate the film festival within the developmental discourse of contemporary Shanghai. Ironically, however, the city in general has been using its Republican era past (1912-49) as a key part of its attempt to regain its cosmopolitan status, what Abbas has called “forward to the past” (2000: 780). Looking back at the early stages of the SIFF, it was a strategic decision for Shanghai to run its film festival after the Propaganda Department’s reshuffling of the cultural scene during the early 1990s. For the Party-state, the Shanghai locale of the film festival should not overshadow its national dimension. Equally, integral to its international vision the SIFF has also weakened or even detached its programming from any regional underpinning. Revisiting Shanghai’s cinematic past can help us situate the cosmopolitan vision of the SIFF against its elusiveness towards the city’s cultural history.

The period of “Shanghai Modern,” the city depicted with the vibrant urban culture of the pre-PRC period, is of unparalleled status in the history of modern Chinese cinema. For instance, when Zhang Yingjin edited *Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922-1943*, the Chinese cinema in the Republican Era, received academic attention from overseas, prompting Zhang to opine that “film culture, when defined in a specific socio-political context, provides a rich and fascinating site for an archaeology of knowledge in modern China” (1999: 4). Shanghai cinema and the urban culture nourishing it are considered “specific conjunctures of space and time, of text and context, of image and sound, of discourses and practices.” Particularly in “*The Urban Milieu of Shanghai Cinema, 1930-40*” Leo Oufan Lee presents the sociocultural conditions “in which Chinese cinema came to prominence in the 1930s.” In Lee’s research, he builds up the relationship between the “emergent film culture” and the distinct modern sensibility that prevailed in 1930s Shanghai (1999: 14). In *Shanghai Dianying Yibainian (A Hundred Year of Shanghai Cinema)*, Chinese film scholars and co-authors Chen Wenping and Cai Jifu have chronicled the film history of Shanghai since 1896, in which Republican Shanghai’s film history is juicily highlighted. Essentially written in a matter-of-fact fashion, the epilogue states, “it can be said that the film history of China prior to 1949 is exactly the film history of Shanghai Cinema...but nowadays it indeed is falling behind...” (Chen & Cai 2007: 458). Aside from the robust development of the film industry, the cinema infrastructure and the cinéphile culture (see Lee 1999), Republican Shanghai undoubtedly constitutes the critical locale of the early transnational interaction between Hollywood cinema and early Chinese films. During the Japanese occupation period (1937-1945), some Shanghai-based film companies and their film stars withdrew to Hong Kong, initiating

new waves of transregional film traffic between Shanghai and Hong Kong, two cities that are socioeconomically and cinematically interdependent. According to Hong Kong film scholar Law Kar, another wave of film professionals' migration between Shanghai and Hong Kong was initiated during the civil war period of 1946-1949, "which significantly added to the luster and vigor of Hong Kong's film industry and made Hong Kong cinema what it is today" (Law 1994: 10). However, in Chen and Cai's account, during 1945-1949, Shanghai again became the epicenter of Chinese cinema when a predominant number of films during this period were produced in Shanghai (2007: 257).

Since the liberation of Shanghai (in May, 1949) and the establishment of PRC, the city's existing film companies and studios, together with the distribution agencies of Hollywood and other foreign companies were "taken-over" (*jieguan*) by the new CCP government. Although the Shanghai Film Studio was founded in November, 1949,¹³ several left-wing film companies, such as the Yangtze River Film Company (*Changjiang Yingye Gongsi*) and Kunlun Film Company (*Kunlun Yingye Gongsi*), were characterized as state-private owned. It was not until 1953 that the Shanghai film industry ended its socialist transformation and bid farewell to the era of private enterprise. Incidentally, a new Shanghai Film Studio has been founded since the industry was reshuffled and nationalized. At the same time, the socialist regime also fortified its control over the cultural institutions. According to Yomi Braester, from the founding of the socialist regime in 1949 "a system modeled on the Soviet Union's was installed to oversee production" in the cultural realm. Thenceforth, "films were expected to depict one of three major categories of the subject matter, namely, the lives of workers, of peasants, and of soldiers" (Braester 2008: 124). Significantly, the first feature film (*gushipian*) produced by the Shanghai Film Studio turned out to be a peasant-centered film called *Nong Jia Le* (*The Happiness of Farmers*, 1950). Its story revolved around the demobilized soldier named Zhang Guobao who returned to the rural hometown after his tour of duty.

Undoubtedly, waves of political campaigns with specific agendas served as themes for the PRC's cultural production during Seventeen Years (1949-1966) (See Braester 2005; Chen & Cai 2007). In addition, the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) constituted the most traumatic chapter of Shanghai Cinema.¹⁴ Chen Wenping and Cai Jifu consider the era after the end of Cultural Revolution a "new period" of Shanghai cinema. In their work, they highlighted several Shanghai Film Studio-based Third and Fourth Generation filmmakers, such as Xie Jin, Wu Yigong, Yang Yanjin, and Huang Shuqin. Nevertheless, directors from the younger generation, such as Zhou Xiaowen (*Ermo*), Feng Xiaoning (*Super Typhoon*) and Chen Yifei (*Reveries on Old Shanghai; The Music Box*), as well as independent arthouse filmmakers Lou Ye (*Suzhou River, Summer Palace*) and Peng Xiaolian (*Shanghai Story*), became associated with Shanghai Film Studio in one way or another. Therefore, in a different context, "Shanghai Cinema" *per se* is

more of a historically significant concept than a contemporary functioning one as we study and evaluate current films that are “made in/about Shanghai.”

During the Mao era, Shanghai’s disconnection with its cinematic past recurred with the red regime’s social re-engineering of Shanghai’s city image. According to Yomi Braester (2005), this is initiated by the campaign for *Emulating the Good Eighth Company of Nanjing Road (Xiang Nanjinglushang Haobalian Xuexi)* in 1963. In prefiguring the arrival of the Cultural Revolution, this campaign has also fortified the authority of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). As suggested by Braester (2008), the common perception of Shanghai runs at opposite extremes. On one hand, the city is portrayed as the “ideological epicenter” that gave birth to the Chinese Communist Party as well as the new organized urban proletariat. On the other hand, the city “has earned the reputation of a metropolis where unchecked economic growth has followed colonial depravity sustained by prostitution, gambling and cinematic illusion”. Braester further argues that if the CCP once oscillated between the contradictory perceptions about Shanghai as such, it was “only in the early 1960s that the rhetoric began to disregard class distinctions and identify Shanghai’s locales and even its idiom as menaces to the Communist goals” (2008: 412). Basing his research on the declassified internal documents and the cultural analysis of propaganda films, Braester posits that at a later phase of this campaign, Shanghai actually “became a reactionary den that had to be put right before it could join in building socialism” (2005: 412). Thus, visual and performance arts were deployed by the socialist propaganda apparatus to serve and legitimize the causes of the campaign. In *Emulating The Good Eighth Company* movement, the CCP’s target was to recode the symbolic meaning of Shanghai and label it with a bourgeois tag to make it essentially incompatible with the socialist enterprise. In this way, the campaign then stood out “among contemporary political movements in addressing Shanghai’s urban spaces and shaping the city’s symbolic imagery” (2005: 412).

Furthermore, propaganda-based cinematic texts internalized the socialist persuasions of the campaign, such as *Sentinels under the Neon Lights (Nihongdeng Xia De Shaobing)*, 1964). The fierce battle to take control of the metropolis—as both “a menace to socialism and as the PLA’s nemesis”—was metaphorically staged on Nanjing Road, similar to the *lieu de mémoire* of Shanghai Republic and its decadent colonial past. The film has “remodeled the existing stereotypes to fit the political agenda of the 1960s, and in so doing, implied a wholesale condemnation of the city” (2005: 424). At the end of his essay, Braester even mentions two films produced in the 1990s, namely, *Once Upon A Time In Shanghai (Shanghai Jishi)*, 1998; dir. Peng Xiaolian) and *The Great Combat: The Big Battle Over Ningbo, Shanghai And Hangzhou (Dajinjun: Dazhan Ning Hu Hang)*, 1999; dir. Wei Lian), both of which, he believes, “attest to the ongoing propaganda effort to rewrite the city’s history” (2005: 442-3).

Therefore, we have Abbas stating that “in Shanghai, the past allows the present to pursue the future: hence ‘memory’ itself is select and fissured, sometimes indistinguishable from amnesia” (2000: 780). Just as the cosmopolitanism featured in Republican Shanghai (labeled as “extraterritoriality” by Abbas) needs to be selectively processed and reconfigured in its modern incarnation, the SIFF has been cautious with the ways by which it is reconnected to Shanghai’s cinematic tradition, when the city’s history itself remains a subtle and elusive politicized subject susceptible to constant revision and erasure. Therefore, despite the prominent existence of a Shanghai Cinema in the past, the SIFF cannot actually find a comfortable way in which to appropriate its cinematic treasure.

The situation is further exacerbated by the authorities’ censorship, which has excluded a large proportion of independent Chinese films, as well as the requirement to accommodate many overproduced, mediocre Chinese films, allowing the screening of non-competitive films from both Asia and Europe. Such a vision of eclecticism is arguably the essential idea behind the SIFF’s *guojihua*. On the other hand, juggling its multiple—and sometimes conflicting versions of the forced-upon or appropriated cosmopolitanism—the SIFF plays its confusing role of acting as a transnational subject, which is apparent in the spokesperson’s awkwardness and reluctance to answer questions from the media regarding the festival. More examples can be witnessed at the festival venues. During morning and afternoon screenings, it is common to see crowds of audience members consisting of retired people rushing to the films with complimentary tickets possibly given by their previous work units. Moreover, given that the film rating system has not been introduced to the Chinese film industry, young family members or high school students can watch R-rated films, such as the Brazilian action/crime flick *Tropa de Elite* (Elite Squad, 2007).

Conclusion

Among the few inner-circulated documents from 2006, the manual drafted by the SMEG’s Office of Major International Events carried an attractive SIFF Five-Year Plan. Although the format of the “Five-Year Plan” recalls the logic of a planned economy, the proposal itself featured a neoliberal utopian vision of Shanghai as the global center of cultural production and urban spectacle. In many ways, this proposal has served as a manual instructing the relevant authorities to transform Shanghai into a global city via the SIFF. In particular, the festival’s Great Leap Forward (or “*feiyue*” according to the document) consists of three stages: (1) between 2006 and 2007, (2) between 2008 and 2009; and (3) that which commenced in 2010. The first period is for “nurturing the brand name” (*pinpai peiyu*), which envisions that the functioning and organization of the festival must be further professionalized, and the festival must successfully clarify its position as independent productions become an integral part of the festival. The

SIFF's breakthrough is directly related to the revisions of policies as regards film import quotas, which should favor selected foreign titles at the SIFF. The second stage is for "establishing the brand name" (*pinpai queli*), which would show the SIFF's rising status as the leading film festival in Asia. The third stage sees the further consolidation of the SIFF's brand name, with international reach and influence achieving the same status as those of the Berlin, Venice, and Cannes film festivals. Moreover, the SIFF must become the generator for both Chinese-language film industry and the film industries in Asia (SMEG 2006).

When working on this paper in 2011, I reflected on the outlook of the 2006 SIFF as it projected itself 5 years forward. However, I will not highlight the problems with the effort to enhance the brand name of the festival but rather show how the SIFF's discourse of "leaping forward" is implicated with the territorial aspiration of the entrepreneurial municipal government and the Party-state's more national aspirations. The SIFF has repeatedly addressed the urgency of obtaining the desired support from the SARFT, especially with regards to the nation's film import quota policy, which designates the CFGC as the sole importer of foreign films, posing great challenges to the SIFF's future plan of positioning itself as the hub of Asian film industries. The excruciatingly slow progress that the SIFF has made in contesting the monopoly of the CFGC and relevant film policies raises questions as to how far the SIFF could go in negotiating its global dimension with both the Party-state's overbearing presence. At the same time, though the SIFF is regarded as one of the best opportunities for Shanghai to perform its revived cosmopolitanism, one of the symptoms of "neoliberalism from afar" has been an ever-greater emphasis on business – this has proved inadequate in boosting the festival as a cultural event with due international reach and reputation. It is thus not just the short-sightedness of the Shanghai municipal government which is at issue but the general emphasis on economic development and the conflicts between city and nation which have made the goal of "leaping forward" – as mapped out in the SIFF's Five-Year Plan – unachievable.

However, after 14 instances of experimentation, the SIFF has also set up a template exemplifying successful state-sanctioned film festivals in postsocialist China. Furthermore, its existence has provided us the opportunity to stage international film festivals. In fact, it is quite obvious that the 1st Beijing International Film Festival (BJIFF) launched in late April 2011 is somehow emulating the SIFF, if not striving to surpass the latter's accomplishments. During the BJIFF launch, *Film Business Asia's* Stephen Cremin keenly observed that key staff from the SIFF, although invited by their rivals, have obviously been ignored, and "while Beijing rejoiced in its large delegation of festival presidents, there to witness and advise the new event, Shanghai was present but not invited to speak" (2011). The BJIFF's entry as an unexpected newcomer in the Asian film festival scene, which rivals the SIFF, reminds us of Iordanova's observations regarding the heated cultural entrepreneurship rivalry between the two Czech film festivals in the post-

communist era. In a strikingly similar way, the BJIFF has not only staged a star-studded red carpet ceremony and showed off the luxurious cast of guests with festival directors and film professionals, it has also miraculously set up its own film market. *Beijing Film Marketing* has merged with the long-running *Beijing Screening* to target the foreign buyers and festival programmers.

Almost as eagerly as Shanghai, Beijing has exhibited a strong will to gain respect in the capitalist world-system for its optimistic vision of the growth of Chinese cinema. At this self-made spectacle, the capital city of PRC has also managed to clean up its image “in the hope that the world is looking” (Abbas 2000: 782). However, the silent presence of the SIFF at Beijing somehow contrasts strongly with the former’s optimistic outlook as delineated in its Five-Year Plan (i.e., to be a leading film festival in Asia, if not the world). It remains to be seen whether or not the influence of the BJIFF can contribute to the capital city’s vision as a “world city with Chinese characteristics.” It is obvious that the BJIFF has pushed both its business logic and vision of *guojihua* to a great extent, such that while its film market has closed deals worth RMB 2,794 billion. Shockingly, cinéophile and programming discourses are almost non-existent at the festival milieu. This imbalance, by comparison, has made the SIFF’s open cosmopolitan outlook more convincing and promising. The year of 2011 marks both the birth of the BJIFF and the re-examination of the SIFF’s five-year evolvement (2006-2010). Would the BJIFF represent a new direction that shall allow us to observe the contesting and co-optation between the state power, film art, and the market on the festival circuit? On the other hand, by introducing the highly prestigious *Jin Jue* Award, has the SIFF, by recognizing legitimized independent films, moved closer to its three-step goal of being the top film festival in the world? We shall leave these questions open. Nevertheless, this essay has laid out facts and various perspectives, thus opening up possible directions through which to undertake further discussions on the matter.

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Notes

- ¹ The Shanghai Media and Entertainment Group (SMEG) is a multimedia television and radio broadcasting, news, and Internet company. The company employs around 5,200 people, with capital assets of RMB 11.7 billion. Formed in 2001, SMEG is the result of a merger among

the People's Radio Station of Shanghai, East Radio Shanghai, Shanghai Television Station, and Oriental Television Station.

² This is the largest and most influential state-run film enterprise in China. It is also the only importer of foreign films in China and a major exporter of Chinese films.

³ For example, let us examine the 12th SIFF in 2009, whose catalogue was offered to the press first time in its history. In its OC, there were 3 Chairpersons, including two vice presidents of the SARFT and the vice mayor of Shanghai, although it was difficult to decide which of them would have the final say in the film selection. The OC had 16 vice chairpersons, some of whom were officials from the SARFT. Most of them were from the municipal administrative bureaus and entities in charge of cultural affairs. An even longer list could be found in the section of *Executive Committee Members*, which could be roughly categorized into three groups as follows: 1) officials from a variety of functioning bureaus of the municipal government; 2) CEOs of the SMEG and the Shanghai Film Group; 3) editors-in-chief from mainstream media outlets based in Shanghai, such as *Wenhui Bao*, *Xinmin Evening News*, and *Jiefang Daily*, to name a few. Vice CEO of *Ping'an Bank*, the major sponsor of SIFF, was also an executive committee member. Apart from the fest's headquarter, the SECRETARIAT, the 12th SIFF delegated its personnel into various units with their own central functions, namely, COMPETITION, FILM MARKET, FORUM, SPECIAL EVENT, PRESS and PROMOTION, ADVERTISEMENT & FUNDING (including the REGISTRATION CENTER and POSTULANT or the volunteer section) and SAFETY and SECURITY; together with a mysteriously titled "the 12th INSTITUTION."

⁴ Personal interview with Chris Berry, November, 2009.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ At the 12th SIFF, for instance, apart from the afore-mentioned competition films for both the Jin Jue and the Asian New Talent Awards, the fest also set up the section of *Panorama Films*, which showcased highly diverse films from all over the world. At the same time, they also have a set entitled *Global Village*, which was categorized and named based on geographical divisions, including segments on Australia, Germany, Switzerland, Turkey, Brazil, and even Upcoming Italian Stars, to name a few. Indeed, such segments echoed SIFF's original understanding of "being international" as consisting of "many countries."

⁷ For instance at the 12th SIFF, of the the four members of the Asian New Talent Award, Nonzee Nimibutr (the leading figure of Thai New Wave Cinema), and Royston Tan (Singaporean filmmaker) have not had their films screened at SIFF at all, whereas those of Korean maestro Kwon-taek Im and Chinese indie filmmaker Zhu Wen have been screened.

⁸ The original regulation item in Chinese was accessed on Jan 11th 2010, at <http://indus.chinafilm.com/200701/10257.html>

⁹ For instance, at the 2009 SIFF, among the 15 *Jinjue Award Competition* file nominees, there were only three titles from Asia, while all the other entries came from Europe. In addition, numerous non-competition films also came from European countries, such as Norway, Denmark, France and Italy. Judging from the history of the SIFF's *Jinjue Award* (the *Golden Goblet*), its top award for competition films, most recipients of the *Best Feature Film* are those coming from Europe. Exceptions occurred in 1993, when the first SIFF awarded the top prize to a Taiwanese film, *Hill of No Return* (*Wuyan De Shanqiu*, 1992; Dir. Wang Tong), and in 2003, when the top award went to PRC's *Life Show* (*Shenghuoxiu*, 2003; Dir. Huo Jianqi). Meanwhile, with the proliferation of the *Jin Jue* awards, the Best Music and Best Technology awards were added in 1999. The Best Screenplay and Best Cinematography awards were added in 2003, and the Jury Grand Prix was added in 2004. As a result, the SIFF was plagued by accusations from the domestic press, which declared that the SIFF seemed to be "splitting awards" to keep a balance between participating countries and regions. Apart from these key sections, the film festival has also affiliated itself with the *International Student*

Shorts Award in 2008. In fact, this part is considered as the only innovative section of the whole film festival.

- 10 Despite its market imperatives and the spokeswoman's easy formulation of "many countries" as "*guojihua*," I would wish to emphasize that the cosmopolitan dynamics of the SIFF can also be approached from its repressed cinéophile tradition. According to the journalist of *Film Business Asia*'s Stephen Cremin, the presence of the cinéophile culture in the SIFF has placed it above the newly launched *Beijing International Film Festival* (BJIFF, since 2011). It is not merely speculation that Shanghai's once prominent status as "Hollywood of the East" and many film professionals' close association with the local film industry and its cinematic tradition have made the film festival possible. Shanghai had harbored the idea of hosting a film festival since the mid-1980s, and many senior filmmakers closely associated with Shanghai Film Studio, such as Zhang Junxiang and Xu Chusang as well as Fourth Generation filmmakers Xie Jin and Wu Yigong, were among its most avid promoters. In fact, Wu Yigong, then head of the Film Bureau of Shanghai played a crucial role in convincing the officials from the SARFT that the SIFF must take place. Wu eventually acted as the executive vice president of the inaugural fest. The Shanghai Film Critics Society has established its annual film awards and has recognized Chinese films since 1991.
- 11 As required in the Film Regulation, the series number of the "Permit for Film Screening" (*Dianyingpian gongying xukezheng*) must be imprinted at the beginning of the film, which is accompanied by an animation clip with a flying dragon.
- 12 In his festival report for the 2009 SIFF, Chris Berry wrote, "Chinese films that have not been through the government censorship system – and that means all Chinese independent films – cannot be shown at the festival. But the filmmakers can be there. For example, Liu Jiayin's *Oxhide II* had just been honoured with a place in the Director's Fortnight at Cannes this year. There is nothing politically or sexually controversial about the film. So, you might expect to see it at Shanghai. But *Oxhide II* is a Chinese indie unsubmitted for censorship and therefore excluded from the festival." For more details, you may refer to "Bigger than Ever: the 12th Shanghai International Film Festival", *Senses of Cinema*, Issue 52 (<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/bigger-than-ever-the-12th-shanghai-international-film-festival/>). It is apparent that the censorship procedure and the political intricacies still loom as the major barriers preventing the SIFF from integrating with the Chinese independent filmmaking scene. Henceforth, I suggest that the presence of a limited number of legitimated Chinese indie works, together with domestic productions with neither possibilities to be distributed/exhibited at domestic cinemas or film festival overseas, will continue to feature in the SIFF's programming.
- 13 See the detailed introduction of the Shanghai Film Studio at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanghai_Film_Studio.
- 14 This pertains to the darkest chapter in China's cinematic history, in which the State systematically erased the city's cinematic tradition, with many of the film professionals persecuted and tortured to death.

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