

Fellows

Xuelei Huang

IFK_Research Fellow

Duration of fellowship

01. March 2013 bis 30. June 2013

Xuelei Huang

PROJECT TITLE

The Cesspool and the Rose Garden: The Social Life of Smell in Modern China, 1840s-1960s

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Xuelei Huang's current research project explores the social and cultural history of smell in modern China and examines the role of sensory or olfactory experience in this historical process of drastic social change, increasing trans-cultural contacts, and the shaping of modern social imaginaries. Drawing upon an extensive contemporary literature in Chinese, English, French and German languages, such as official documents, missionary reports, travel writings, diaries, novels, and advertisements, this project seeks to map out the richly textured Chinese and Western accounts of smell and to delineate the ways in which diverse meanings of scents were contested, (re)constructed and internalized in daily life. Smell is more than a chemical and biological phenomenon; it carries culturally and historically constructed values. Huang argues that what was foul and what was fragrant, symbolically represented by the imagery of cesspool and rose garden taken from a true story, were not necessarily intrinsic to particular odours and immediately transparent to the Chinese nose, but were constructed through diverse agents such as knowledge production, power relations and commercialism. In this process, odour produced its own form of social power in the shaping and

reshaping of modern notions of self, gender, class, and nation in China's recent history.

CV

Xuelei Huang received her PhD from Heidelberg University in 2009. Her dissertation was the winner of Heidelberg's Ruprecht Karls Prize. Before becoming a research fellow at the IFK, she had been working at Academia Sinica in Taiwan and the Nantes Institute for Advanced Studies in France. She has published essays on Chinese cinema in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes, and she has just completed her book manuscript entitled "Shanghai Filmmaking: Crossing the Borders, Connecting to the Globe, 1922–1938." She has been awarded fellowships by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Gerda Henkel Foundation, and the Graduate Academy of Heidelberg University.

Publications

Selected Publications: Through the Looking Glass of Spatiality: Spatial Practice, Contact Relation and the Isis Theater in Shanghai, 1917–1937, in: *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, vol. 23, no. 2 (Fall 2011), p. 1–33.