



# THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTE FOR CHINESE STUDIES

ICS presents the "Re-Imagining China's Past and Present" Lecture Series

### The Aesthetics of Technological Excess in Contemporary Chinese Performance

Thursday, November 2, 2017

4:00-5:30 pm

Psychology Building 0010

1835 Neil Ave

#### Tarryn Chun

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**Abstract:** From the films and site-specific "real-scenery performances" (*shijing yanchu* 实景演出) of Zhang Yimou to massive song-and-dance epics staged in honor of national holidays, the People's Republic of China has become known for spectacular displays of high-tech special effects in visual culture and performance. Tracing the rise to prominence of such phenomena in the PRC, this presentation will examine the ways in which theatrical productions can become performances of technology, setting digital effects and computerized equipment on par with human actors and complicating concepts of live performance, natural landscape, and national culture. It demonstrates that showcasing Chinese innovation has become a central concern of state-sponsored and commercial theatrical productions over the last fifteen years, and argues that success in this domain has established what might be termed an "aesthetics of technological excess" as a prominent artistic mode in contemporary Chinese culture. As this new aesthetics dominates China's main stages, it incites critical responses from more avant-garde corners of the performing arts world and raises theoretical questions regarding the changing nature of spectacle in contemporary China.

**Bio:** Tarryn Chun is an Assistant Professor in the department of Film, Television, and Theatre at the University of Notre Dame, where she also holds a concurrent appointment in the department of East Asian Languages and Cultures and is a Faculty Fellow at the Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies. Prior to joining the faculty at Notre Dame, she received her PhD from Harvard University and was a postdoctoral fellow in the Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on modern and contemporary Chinese theatre, and she teaches courses in Asian theatre, global theatre history, intercultural performance, adaptation, and intersections among theatre and other arts/media. Her work has appeared in *TDR: The Drama Review*, *Asian Theatre Journal*, *Wenxue* (Literature), *Xiju yishu* (Theatre Arts) and the edited volumes *Staging China: New Theatres for the Twenty-First Century* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) and *A New Literary History of Modern China* (Harvard University Press, 2017). Currently, she is completing a book manuscript entitled *Revolutionary Stagecraft: Theatre, Technology, and Media in Modern China*, which examines the relationship between technological modernization and artistic innovation in 20th-21st century Chinese theatre. She also serves as Vice-President of the Association for Asian Performance.

**Free and Open to the Public**

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