Chinese Political Propaganda Posters

A New Exhibition

at

Picture This Gallery, 13th Floor, 9 Queen’s Road, Central, Hong Kong

24th July to 16th August 2014

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Picture This Gallery is pleased to announce our forthcoming exhibition, Chinese Political Propaganda Posters, which will open with a cocktail reception on Thursday 24th July from 6pm to 8.30pm and will continue until Saturday 16th August. This exhibition for sale showcases vintage and original propaganda posters published by the Chinese government from the 1950s to 1990s.
Background to the Poster Collection

Propaganda posters were a critical and central tool used by the Chinese authorities in the second half of the 20th century to distribute messages, mobilise support and influence and guide the masses. The posters are most closely associated with the period of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976) though they were widely used both before and after this period. Our exhibition includes posters from the mid 1950’s right through to the late 1990’s, running the full gambit of political & social messages and campaigns all aimed to provide a simple and effective method to influence and control the People.

Chinese propaganda posters are rich in style and content. The typical mid 1950’s style embodies the influence of Socialist-realism with idealized and heroic workers in their utopian communities. By the late 1950’s and early 1960’s era of the Great Leap Forward and the Cold War we see the creation of folk art style posters. Later in the Cultural Revolution period from the mid 1960’s we see a change to the “red-art” style using wood-block style printing and a more violent and confrontational art which fits closely with the mood of that era. The red and black posters of the late 1960’s were largely made by art-school student rebellion groups (red guards) and are hugely powerful in both style and message.
Political posters produced anywhere in the world can be generally divided into two distinct categories: those produced within the dominant system (i.e., by the government, by the military and other government apparatus, by business interest, etc.) and those that challenge the system (which are sometimes referred to as “oppositional” art). Clearly the posters in this exhibition fall squarely into the first category. They were part of a highly controlled media apparatus whose objectives were to consolidate authority and transform society under a particular model.

The posters in this exhibition represent a range of visual styles and themes produced in China during this period. From a design standpoint the posters are stylistically consistent and use a dominant representational image to which a graphic designer has added a headline and in many cases a secondary level of text. In most cases the typography is simple and unsophisticated; most likely thus because of a combination of the perceived seriousness of the delivered messages and the limitation imposed by the simple printing presses on which these posters were produced.
Exhibition Highlights - Posters from the Hong Kong 1967 Riots

In summer of 1967 Hong Kong was paralysed by severe riots, fomented by pro-Cultural Revolution elements both in the city and on the mainland, which made a direct assault on the British colonial administration. Several anti-British posters were issued in China during this period in similar style and vein to the domestic propaganda posters, seeking to encourage the anti-Hong Kong Government supporters to rise up and overthrow the establishment. These posters were not just distributed in China but were also brought or smuggled into Hong Kong and posted up in the windows of selected mainland controlled businesses in the City. Today these posters are extremely rare, and in some cases unrecorded. Picture This Gallery has uncovered four different posters from this period which will be included in the exhibition and will be of particular interest to students and followers of local Hong Kong history.

Exhibition Details

The Opening Reception of this vintage original poster exhibition will be held at Picture This Gallery, 13th Floor, 9 Queen’s Road Central, Hong Kong, on Thursday 24th July 2014 with a cocktail reception from 6pm to 8.30pm. The exhibition will continue until Saturday 16th August 2014.

Requests for further information or for images which can be used for editorial purposes should be directed to Picture This Gallery.

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