



Painting the City Red: Chinese Cinema and the Urban Contract (Asia-Pacific: Culture, Politics, and Society)

Yomi Braester

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Painting the City Red illuminates the dynamic relationship between the visual media, particularly film and theater, and the planning and development of cities in China and Taiwan, from the emergence of the People's Republic in 1949 to the staging of the Beijing Olympics in 2008. Yomi Braester argues that the transformation of Chinese cities in recent decades is a result not only of China's abandonment of Maoist economic planning in favor of capitalist globalization but also of a shift in visual practices. Rather than simply reflect urban culture, movies and stage dramas have facilitated the development of new perceptions of space and time, representing the future city variously as an ideal socialist city, a metropolis integrated into the global economy, and a site for preserving cultural heritage.

Drawing on extensive archival research, interviews with leading filmmakers and urban planners, and close readings of scripts and images, Braester describes how films and stage plays have promoted and opposed official urban plans and policies as they have addressed issues such as demolition-and-relocation plans, the preservation of vernacular architecture, and the global real estate market. He shows how the cinematic rewriting of historical narratives has accompanied the spatial reorganization of specific urban sites, including Nanjing Road in Shanghai; veterans' villages in Taipei; and Tiananmen Square, centuries-old courtyards, and postmodern architectural landmarks in Beijing. In *Painting the City Red*, Braester reveals the role that film and theater have played in mediating state power, cultural norms, and the struggle for civil society in Chinese cities.

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