In recent decades the previously assumed dominance of western(ized) conceptions of aesthetic modernity within the international art world has been challenged by a critically becalming diversification of cultural outlooks widely referred to as ‘contemporaneity’. Contributing to that diversification are assertions within mainland China of essential as well as relative differences between Chinese and western art.

In response to the critical impasse posed by contemporaneity, Paul Gladston charts a historical relay of mutually formative interactions between the artworlds of China and the West as part of a new transcultural theory of artistic criticality. Informed by deconstructivism as well as syncretic Confucianism, Gladston extends this theory to a reading of the work of the contemporary artist Zhang Peili and his involvement with the Hangzhou-based art group, the Pond Association (Chi she). Disclosed by that reading is a critical aesthetics resistant to any single interpretative viewpoint, including those of Chinese exceptionalism and the supposed immanence of deconstructivist uncertainty.

Addressing art in and from the People’s Republic of China as a significant aspect of post-West contemporaneity, Gladston seeks to provide a new critical understanding of what it means to be ‘contemporary’ and the profound changes taking place in the art world today.

Suggested reading in preparation to the talk (NOT mandatory):

Somewhere (and Nowhere) between Modernity and Tradition: Towards a Critique of International and Indigenous Perspectives on the Significance of Contemporary Art” as preparation to this session.” Tate Papers, (Spring 2014). [LINK]

Space is limited so please RSVP CTCA@carleton.ca