

# PUBLIC LECTURE

## ZhenShanMei/true, good, beautiful: Three Antinomies of Value and Three Double Movements in Late Socialism, or "Socialism" Lately

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This talk plots a line between two ethnographic projects. First, art test fever (meishugaokao re), which followed from and participated in the dramatic expansion of the Chinese art schools and cultural industries in the 1990s and early 2000s; and second, the development of "low-finance", mass-market, bank-based wealth management services (licai yewu), along with mass financial media, which followed from and participated in the dramatic expansion of Chinese consumer financial markets from roughly 2005 on. Between these two events (processes, situations), spreads a scattergram of ethnographic moments and media texts, analyzed here in terms of three antinomies in the forms of virtue. First, there is the paradox of the true and the real (two translations of zhen): truth as accuracy to evidence or correspondence to the state of affairs, versus realism as a "pragmatic-performative" approach to discourse, concerned with the effects of statements in the world (or truth that is still becoming or not yet real). Secondly, there is the paradox of narratives of virtue and corruption: both of them alternately hegemonic and subversive, authoritarian and counter-authoritarian. Thirdly, there is the paradox of aesthetics: often represented as a field of discourse lying outside of politics and economics, but also as the terrain in and through which power (and capital) are generated. The talk ends with a brief consideration of how these antinomies refract in the double movements of the Xi Jinping era: double movements of neoliberalism and neoMaoism; of popular rebellion and authoritarian control; of expansionary neoimperial power and incipient domestic postindustrial decline.

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