



*Something the Eye Cannot Descry*  
*On Art: East and West*

The 1st WHU-UNITO Academic Week for Philosophy of Art  
*October 7-11, 2019*  
*Wuhan University, China*

*In association with*  
The Labont – Center for Ontology, Italy  
School of Philosophy at Wuhan University, China

*Labont*



Convenors

Tiziana Andina (Professor in Theoretical Philosophy, University of Turin)  
Xiao Ouyang (Associate Professorial Research Fellow in Aesthetics, Wuhan University)

Organizers

Xiao Ouyang (Wuhan University)  
Erica Onnis (University of Turin)

*With special Thanks to*  
“The Wuhan University Sino-foreign Joint Research Platform Seed Fund”  
Office of International Affairs at Wuhan University



武汉大学国际交流部  
Office of International Affairs



## Schedule



Monday 7<sup>th</sup> October

Opening Lecture

19:00-21:00 Public Lecture: *Dohumanity*

Place: Room B107, Zhenghua Building, School of Philosophy

Speaker: Professor Maurizio Ferraris (Full Professor, Former Vice-Rector, University of Turin)

“From each according to his ability” is the first part of the biblical saying that constitutes the first precept of Marxism. As is well known, it is rather difficult to achieve. But what is even more difficult - indeed apparently impossible - to realize is the second part: “to each one according to his needs”. This principle, which was already challenging at the time of Jesus Christ, seems absolutely unfeasible in this age of unleashed Turbo-capitalism. But are we sure that it is so? In my proposal for Digital Welfare I hope to demonstrate that, if we adequately understand our time and its characteristics, we will see that we are indeed in the most suitable conditions for the realization of a communism (or Christianity) of needs.



Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> October

Series of Talks

9:30-10:00 Welcome

### **Morning Session**

10:00-10:50

Peng Feng (Peking University), “Discerning the Indiscernibles: the External Discernment, the Internal Discernment, and the Middle Discernment”

11:00-11:50

Tiziana Andina (University of Turin), “What is Art? The Question of Definition Reloaded”

*12:00-14:00 Lunch Break*

### **Afternoon Session**

14:00-14:50

Maurizio Ferraris (University of Turin) “From Fountain to Moleskine”

15:00-15:50

Liu Geng (Wuhan University), “Mind and Painting: An Ontological Turn in Chinese Aesthetics of Painting”

*15:50-16:10 Coffee/Tea Break*

16:10-17:00

Erica Onnis (University of Turin), “Emergence and Aesthetic Properties”

17:10-18:00

Xiao Ouyang (Wuhan University) “Rethinking Artistic Beauty: A Cross-cultural Investigation”

18:30 *Dinner*

## Speakers

### ❖ Professor Maurizio Ferraris, University of Turin, Italy



Maurizio Ferraris is full Professor of Philosophy at the University of Turin, where he is former Deputy Rector for Humanities Research and President of the LabOnt – Center for Ontology. He is advisory member of the Center for Advanced Studies of South East Europe (Rijeka) and of the Internationales Zentrum Für Philosophie NRW; he is doctor honoris causa in Humanities at the University of Flores (Buenos Aires) and at the University of Pécs. He is columnist for ‘La Repubblica’ and for ‘Neue Zürcher Zeitung’, the Director of ‘Rivista di Estetica’, of ‘Critique’, of ‘Círculo Hermenéutico editorial’ and of the ‘Revue francophone d’esthétique’. He wrote almost sixty books that have been translated into several languages. He has

worked in the field of Aesthetics, Hermeneutics, and Social Ontology, attaching his name to the theory of Documentality and contemporary New Realism.

### ❖ Professor Peng Feng, Peking University, China



Peng Feng 彭锋 is Professor of Art Theory and Dean of the School of Arts at Peking University, China. He has been recently elected Yangtze River Scholar, which is the most prestigious academic title for scholars of humanities in China. Professor Peng publishes widely in aesthetics and philosophy and theory of art, both in English and in Chinese. He is also known for introducing many new international debates and frontier researches into the Chinese discourse. In the early 2000s, he began to transform his accomplished academic career by entering into what is, by Western standards, an exceptionally intense engagement with contemporary art. Today,

having curated over 200 exhibitions, Peng Feng is one of the most prolific and influential curators in contemporary China. This ascent was marked by the invitation to curate the Chinese pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale (2011), the first International Sculpture Biennial in Datong, China (2011), the first International Art Biennial in Wulumuqi, China (2014), the second International Lacquer Art Biennial in Fuzhou, China (2018), the Pingyao International Sculptures Project, China (2019), and so forth.

## ❖ Professor Tiziana Andina, University of Turin, Italy



Tiziana Andina is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Turin (Italy). Since 2016 she is the director of the research center, LabOnt – Center for Ontology at the University of Turin ([www.labont.it](http://www.labont.it)). She has been a fellow of Columbia University (2008-2009) and Käte Hamburger Kolleg, University of Bonn (2015) as well as Visiting Professor at ITMO University, Russia (2014). She has published many articles on philosophy and the philosophy of art in several international journals. Her recent work concerns the definition of art and social ontology. Her publications include: *Il volto Americano di Nietzsche*, La Città del Sole, 1999; *Il problema della percezione nella filosofia di Nietzsche*, Albo Versorio, 2005; *Arthur Danto: Philosopher of Pop*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2011, *The Philosophy of Art: The Question of Definition. From Hegel to Post-Dantian Theories*, Bloomsbury Academy 2013, *An Ontology for Social Reality*, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2016, *What is Art? The Question of Definition Reloaded*, Brill, 2017 and (ed. by), *Bridging the Analytical Continental Divide. A Companion to Contemporary Western Philosophy*, Brill 2014. She is co-editor of the international series *Brill Research Perspectives in Art and Law* and of the international series *Analytic Aesthetics and Contemporary Art* (Bloomsbury Academic).

## ❖ Professor Liu Geng, Wuhan University, China



Liu Geng 刘耕 is Associate Professorial Research Fellow at Wuhan University. He graduated from Peking University. His research interests lie mainly in Chinese aesthetics and Chinese art history. He has published more than ten peer-reviewed articles, several of which are in the most influential academic journals in China. In recent years, he has started to work on comparative study of Chinese and Western art history and aesthetics. He has been awarded several research grants, including a prestigious one from the National Social Science Fund of China, for his projects on the Chinese literati painting. In addition to his academic work, Dr. Liu also publishes novels and writes stories for children.

## ❖ Professor Xiao Ouyang, Wuhan University, China



Xiao Ouyang (欧阳霄) is Associate Professorial Research Fellow at Wuhan University, China. He was an Irish Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow (2016-2018) at University College Cork, Ireland, where he also completed his PhD. He mainly works on comparative philosophy and is interested in various topics in aesthetics, ethics, political and social philosophy. He has publications on international journals such as *Philosophy East and West*, *Monumenta Serica: Journal of Oriental Studies* and *Australasian Philosophical Review*. He also publishes on Chinese journals. He was interviewed by *The Irish Times* (“What does the rise of China mean for western values”, Nov. 2017). He has two books forthcoming. Besides academic work, he devotes himself to Chinese classical arts such as poetry, calligraphy, painting and literati music.

## ❖ Dr. Erica Onnis, University of Turin, Italy

Erica Onnis is a research fellow and PhD candidate in Theoretical Philosophy at the University



of Turin, where she has been a member of the Labont – Center for Ontology since 2015. She has been working as a seminar lecturer and teaching assistant in Theoretical Philosophy (course leaders: Prof. Tiziana Andina and Prof. Maurizio Ferraris) since 2016. During her PhD she has also been visiting PhD candidate at the University College Cork (Ireland) and at the University of Lisbon (Portugal) and invited academic guest at Wuhan University (China). Erica’s research interests lie in metaphysics and philosophy of science. In particular, her doctoral research concerns the nature of emergent phenomena. Erica is also interested in Chinese language

and philosophy, and she is a team member of the recently instituted project between the Wuhan University and the University of Turin, the WHU-UniTO Research Partnership For Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art.

## Abstracts

### **Andina, Tiziana: *What is Art? The Question of Definition Reloaded***

What is Art is one of the classic questions that philosophy has addressed over the ages, from the ancients to today. Taking as its starting point debates over the various definitions of art found in history of philosophy, this talk discusses some of the major theories offered by both, the analytic and continental traditions. Finally, a series of considerations are addressed to help shift the problem of definition onto a new plane, one that is able to respond to the challenges of the performative and participatory arts, which more than any other form of art present particularly unconventional ontologies.

### **Ferraris, Maurizio: *From Fountain to Moleskine***

Photography was invented in the mid-nineteenth century, and ever since that moment painters have been asking what they are there for. Everyone has their own strategy. Some say they do not paint what is there, but their impressions. Others paint things that are not seen in the world, and therefore cannot be photographed, because they are abstractions. Others yet exhibit urinals in art galleries. This may look like the end of art but, instead, it is the dawn of a new day, not only for painting but – this is the novelty – for every form of art, as well as for the social world in general and for industry, where repetitive tasks are left to machines and humans are required to behave like artists.

### **Liu Geng: *Mind and Painting: An Ontological Turn in Chinese Aesthetics of Painting***

During Tang and Song Dynasties, the history of Chinese painting had undergone tremendous changes. Behind this revolution in painting history, Aesthetics of painting had also been undergoing a major shift. The infiltration of the theory of mind into Aesthetics has profoundly influenced the meaning and function of painting. From the theory of Zong Bing in the Southern Dynasties, we find the traces of Buddhist theory of mind. In the Song Dynasty, the northern landscape painting school represented by Jing Hao, Guan Tong, Fan Kuan, Li Cheng, and Guo Xi revealed a clear thought of mind. In particular, Guo Xi, in the *Linquan gaozhi*, not only clarified position of his Confucian scholars, but also established the theory of the artist's mental cultivation under the influence of the thought of Neo-Confucianism. As a representative of literati, Su Shi combines the Buddhist theory of mind, , expressing the realm of self-expression by painting, and pursuing for a poetic dwelling in painting. This idea has laid the unique value of literati painting. The transformation of the ontology and function of painting brought about by the theory of the mind is the fundamental motivation for the transformation of the paintings in the Tang and Song Dynasties.

**Onnis, Erica: *Emergence and Aesthetic Properties***

The origin of the notion of emergence traces back to John Stuart Mill, while the formulation of the term to George Henry Lewes. These two philosophers, together with others such as Samuel Alexander and C.D. Broad, have been grouped under the label of *British Emergentists* for their focus on the notion of emergence. In a nutshell, emergence can be intended in two different ways. First, as a *diachronic process*; second, as a *synchronic dependence relationship*. In both cases, emergence entails a partial dependence and a partial autonomy. In other words, a phenomenon is emergent if it *depends* on a (diachronically) previous or (synchronically) more fundamental phenomenon, being at the same time also *distinct, autonomous* and – usually – *causally efficacious* as well. Aesthetic properties are higher order properties, depending upon both a material base (such as, for instance, a block of marble) and an intentional, perceiving subject. Aesthetic properties are therefore emergent in that they are dependent on and determined by non-aesthetic properties, but they emerge from the interaction of these properties with “qualified observers” in given cultural contexts: an essential interaction that rules out supervenience and physical determinism.

**Ouyang Xiao: *Rethinking Artistic Beauty: A Cross-cultural Investigation***

Beauty has been a keyword in Western aesthetics, while it also seems to be an obsolete and even obstructive idea in contemporary philosophy of art. In philosophical aesthetics, there has been the so-called “‘anti-aesthetics’ movement” since the 1980s, which heavily criticises the traditional Western aesthetic discourse and its upholding of beauty as a fundamental issue. In this paper, I firstly review some influential historical thoughts of beauty (especially, artistic beauty) in Western aesthetics. I then point out the loss of influence of the beautiful art responses to the non-realist turn and anti-essentialist movement in aesthetics. I argue that a cross-cultural comparative study helps to shed light on an understanding of the fate of beauty in Western aesthetics. I also explore the peculiar predicament of Chinese aesthetics concerning the notion of *mei* 美, which is usually regarded as the counterpart of beauty or the beautiful.

**Peng Feng: *Discerning the Indiscernibles: the External Discernment, the Internal Discernment, and the Middle Discernment***

To discern the indiscernibles is the main purpose of Danto’s philosophy of art. Influenced by analytical philosophy, Chan Buddhism or Chanism, and symbolism, three ways of discerning can be identified in Danto’s text, that is, the external discernment, the internal discernment, and the middle discernment. However, neither analytic philosophy and its external discernment nor Chan Buddhism and its internal discernment can distinguish the indiscernibles, only symbolism and its middle discernment have potential to do so. Unfortunately, Danto was so indulged in analytical philosophy and Chan Buddhism that he could not see this promise from symbolism.



Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> October

Meeting & Guest Lecture

14:00-15:00 Place TBA

The UNITO delegation is meeting Professor Zou Yuanjiang (Director of the Research Cluster of Aesthetics, WHU) and other colleagues.

18:30-20:55 Seminar room B301, Zhenhua Building, School of Philosophy

Professor Tiziana Andina is delivering a lecture “The ontology of the art: Exemplarity and Normativity in Contemporary Art” at Dr. Xiao Ouyang’s postgraduate seminar *Selected Topics in Western Aesthetics*.

All the MA and PhD students from the School of Philosophy and other related majors are welcomed .



Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> October

Philosophy Salon

15:00-17:00 Place TBA

Dr. Erica Onnis is giving a talk “Emergence: Taxonomies and Criteria” at a student union event.

All are welcomed!

### With Special Thanks to

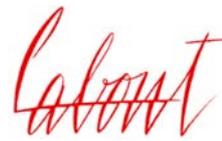
Co-organisers: Yan Xu, Miao Shuang.

Special Advisors: Prof. Zou Yuanjiang, Prof. Yong Li.

Student Assistants: Ruan Meng, Wei Yuyang, Hao Zedong, Chen Dejie, Pang Xiaodi, Wang Tingting, Chen Bohan, Hu Xinzhu, Wei Zhihong.

## *The WHU-UniTO Research Partnership for Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art*

### 武汉大学-都灵大学哲学美学联合研究平台



In 2019, the Labont – Center for Ontology of the University of Turin (Italy) and the School of Philosophy Department of Wuhan University (China) established the *WHU-UniTO Research Partnership for Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art*, which received support from the Wuhan University Sino-foreign Joint Research Platform Seed Fund Support Plan.

The *WHU-UniTO Research Partnership* develops academic collaborations in research, teaching and cultural exchanges between Italy and China. In these few months of cooperation, several interesting projects have been already set up. In June 2019, a workshop on comparative philosophy jointly organized by Wuhan University, the University of Turin and the Queen's University of Belfast took place in Belfast (North Ireland). In December 2019, it will be published an issue of *Rivista di Estetica*, one of the oldest Italian academic journal of philosophy directed by Maurizio Ferraris, dedicated to the relationships between Chinese and Western thought and co-edited by Erica Onnis (University of Turin) and Xiao Ouyang (Wuhan University). Representatives of the University of Turin and of the Wuhan University, moreover, will be present at the *2019 Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture* that will be held in Shenzhen (China) at the end of 2019 with a panel about *The Documedia City*. Eventually, from October 7<sup>th</sup> to October 11<sup>th</sup> 2019, in Wuhan, the first *WHU-UNITO Academic Week for Philosophy of Art* will gather excellent scholars from Italy and China to discuss central topics in Philosophy of Art, and exchange knowledge and ideas from both the Chinese and Italian perspective.



*Calvin*