



# KU'ER WORLDS

## Queering Chinese American Identities in Art and Film

“Every artist is afraid. The difference is that there are artists that are persistent and keep doing it, and those who don’t. As artists you generally have to get comfortable with sitting in discomfort.”

—Andrew Thomas Huang in *W* magazine

### SCREENINGS AND CONVERSATION

Thursday, April 21, 2022  
Ray Stark Family Theatre

### ART AND FILMMAKING WORKSHOP

Friday, April 22, 2022  
Friends Of The USC Libraries  
Lecture Hall, DML 240

### WHAT TO KNOW

- *Ku'er* is a Mandarin word for queer that translates as “cool kids.”
- The filmmakers participating in these events work in a range of genres and styles, from music video to documentary to art film.

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS AND PANELISTS

**PATTY CHANG** is a Los Angeles–based artist and educator whose performance, video, installation, and narrative works explore identity, gender, transnationalism, colonial legacies, the environment, large-scale infrastructural projects, and impacted subjectivities. Her work has been shown around the world at venues including MoMA, the Hammer Museum, the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, and the 2016 Shanghai Biennial. She is a professor of art at USC.

**ANDREW THOMAS HUANG** is a GRAMMY-nominated music-video director who has collaborated with Björk, FKA Twigs, and Thom Yorke. His films have been exhibited at MoMA, the Sydney Opera House, and MOCA. He holds a degree in fine art and animation from USC.

**JENNY LIN** is an associate professor of critical studies at the USC Roski School of Art and Design. She formerly worked at MOCA and with artists and galleries in Shanghai.

**LESLEY MA** is the inaugural Ming Chu Hsu and Daniel Xu Associate Curator of Asian Art in the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. From 2013 to 2022, she was founding Curator, Ink Art at M+, Hong Kong.

**WANGSHUI** is a New York–based artist and filmmaker who has exhibited and screened work internationally at venues including the Whitney Museum of American Art.

**HAO WU** is a writer, director, and documentarian. He directed *People’s Republic of Desire*, which won the Grand Jury Award for Best Documentary at SXSW in 2018, and *76 Days*, which was shortlisted for an Academy Award and won a Primetime Emmy and a Peabody Award in 2021.

The symbol on the character’s pelvis in *Kiss of the Rabbit God* is the double happiness symbol, which, Andrew Thomas Huang explained to *W* magazine, “typically is a symbol for love”

## VOCABULARY CORNER

*Ku’er* is a Chinese word that translates as “cool kid.” It’s also a transliteration of the English word “queer.” It’s become the Mandarin counterpart for “queer,” while not having the history of negative connotation held by the activist-reclaimed English word. “[*Ku’er*] signifies coolness and differences in the neoliberal economy,” says scholar and Queer Diaspora Collective member Ian Liujia Tian.

The organizers of the Beijing Queer Film Festival wrote in 2009: “In the past three decades, no word has created so many confusions and paradoxes as *ku’er*. As the term challenges traditional gender binaries, it also ignores clichéd lesbian and gay theory. As it tries to establish new gender identities, it also insists on subverting its own identity politics. As it refuses to submit to the mainstream, it wanders within the mainstream.”



Andrew Thomas Huang



Hao Wu



Lesley Ma

“[It is] surprising to me that I feel like my family somehow touched on the really universal story, which is how you assert your individuality when your family or this community at large expect you to be something different. It’s not necessarily just sexuality per se, but, you know, every older generation has expectations for the younger one, especially maybe more traditional cultures.”

—Hao Wu in *Psychology Today*

### FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- How do Patty Chang’s videos address stereotypes of Asian American women?
- What connections does WangShui make between transnational movements and transgender and transcultural identities?
- Do you agree with Hao Wu’s statement that asserting individuality in relation to a family or a community is a universal struggle? Is this something you have experienced?
- Why do you think *Kiss of the Rabbit God* blends the realistic and the fantastical? What is the effect of this?
- What did you think of the mix of narrative, documentary, and art films in this program?

### IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- Courses and events at the USC School of Cinematic Arts [cinema.usc.edu](http://cinema.usc.edu)
- Courses and events at the USC Roski School of Art and Design [roski.usc.edu](http://roski.usc.edu)
- Queer and Trans API Initiative at USC  
Email [qtapi@usc.edu](mailto:qtapi@usc.edu) for information
- USC LGBTQ+ Student Center <https://lgbtqplus.usc.edu/>
- Outfest and the Outfest Fusion QTBIPOC Film Festival [outfest.org](http://outfest.org)



Hao Wu filming *People’s Republic of Desire*



*Kiss of the Rabbit God*



USC Roski School of Art and Design

## DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

Tang Li of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this event. Electronic resources are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at [libraries.usc.edu](http://libraries.usc.edu) but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

### BOOKS

- ⦿ Hongwei Bao, [\*Queer Media in China\*](#) (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021).
- ⦿ Shi-Yan Chao, [\*Queer Representations in Chinese-Language Film and the Cultural Landscape\*](#) (Amsterdam: Amsterdam Univ. Press, 2020).
- ⦿ Song Hwee Lim, [\*Celluloid Comrades: Representations of Male Homosexuality in Contemporary Chinese Cinemas\*](#) (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 2006).
- ⦿ Zoran Pecic, [\*New Queer Sinophone Cinema: Local Histories, Transnational Connections\*](#) (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
- ⦿ Lisa Rofel, [\*Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture\*](#) (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2007).

### ARCHIVES

- ⦿ [ONE Archives at the USC Libraries](#)

### DATABASES

- ⦿ [Archives of Sexuality & Gender: LGBTQ History and Culture Since 1940](#)
- ⦿ [Gender Watch](#)
- ⦿ [LGBT Life with Full Text](#)
- ⦿ [LGBT Magazine Archive](#)
- ⦿ [LGBT Thought and Culture](#)

### VIDEOS

- ⦿ [\*Queer China, Comrade China\*](#) (Icarus Films, 2008).
- ⦿ [\*Soundless Wind Chime\*](#) (Breaking Glass Pictures, 2009).
- ⦿ [\*On China. LGBT\*](#) (CNN Newsource Sales, 2014).
- ⦿ [\*Lilies' Talk\*](#) (Buddha Image, 2017).
- ⦿ [\*Inside the Chinese Closet\*](#) (Women Make Movies, 2021).



## QUEER MEDIA IN CHINA

Hongwei Bao

