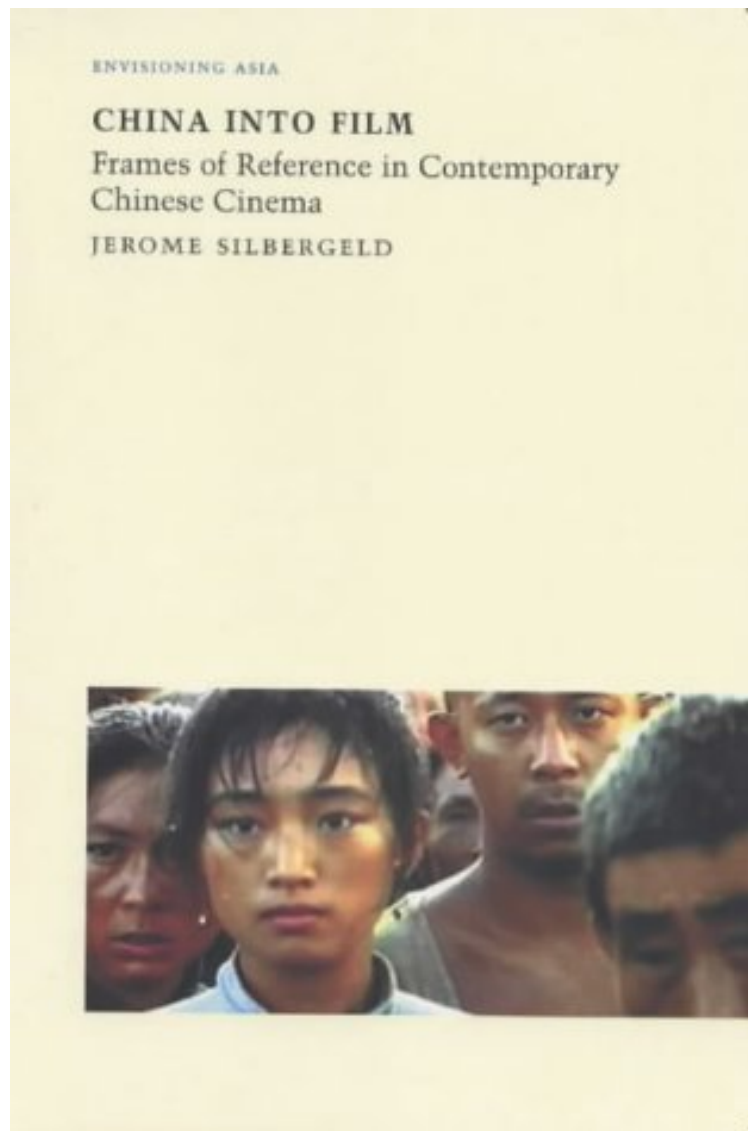


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China into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema (Envisioning Asia)

Jerome Silbergeld

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Jerome Silbergeld : China into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema (Envisioning Asia) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised China into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema (Envisioning Asia):

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. About timeBy Sebastian ElcanoIt's about time a book on

contemporary Chinese cinema with such detail gets published. This book chronicles the growth of the new Chinese cinema and how traditional visual arts, as well as Mao's revolution influenced the filmmakers. Many westerners agree that what makes contemporary Chinese films quite powerful are the simplicity of film elements from the story to art direction and cinematography. This book clearly describes these co-relations. The visual analysis of the author makes us more appreciative of Zhang Yimou's composition or Chen Kaige's films' characters. Even if there are many films about contemporary Chinese cinema (and there aren't that many), this is the first book cinephiles of Chinese cinema should buy. 6 of 8 people found the following review helpful. good analyses, poor quality stills. By a reviewer. The author provides an art-historic analysis of some of the most influential films in Chinese cinema between 1984 and 1997. The analyses draw not only from the films themselves but also from both contemporary political contexts and historical treatments of the subject matters. The latter illustrated with traditional arts reproduced in the book. Despite the author's qualifying statements on his selection of films to cover and that he has not "sought unnecessarily to establish a new canon," I'm nevertheless left wondering why he has chosen not to mention notable films like Zhang Yimou's "To Live" and Tian Zhuangzhuang's "The Blue Kite" when he discusses at great length Chen Kaige's "Farewell My Concubine." The most annoying part of the book though is the terrible quality of the stills. They are blurry snapshots of paused screens. The book would have been better off without them; the text clearly does not need them. No studio credit was given for any of the screen shots. (For contrast, see Tam and Dissanayake's "New Chinese Cinema," which manages to present sharp frame stills from the studios.) 3 of 12 people found the following review helpful. the real thing. By A Customer. Maybe the blurry photos in this book tell the whole story about it. They're not nice, crisp, fake publicity photos sold by studios that never appear in the real films. They are blurry because (I guess) they come from real (blurry) Chinese films. No other book about Chinese film does this, but this book is about how Chinese films really look, and why (use a fake photo and how can you write honestly about how "the film" looks?). It is not a fashionable polemic. It is not about technical matters like lighting and film economics. Instead, it is about Chinese culture, Chinese artistic traditions (how new films fit into old visual patterns), and the politics of film makers getting around the Chinese censor. It isn't about the most popular films but uses films that seem best to illustrate important themes. It's not a light read and it's not journalistic film "criticism" -- but it makes you think about the subject and teaches a different way to really understand Chinese cinema and its place in Chinese culture today.

Since 1984, Chinese cinema has been the most dramatic entry onto the international film scene. *China into Film* is the first book to look at contemporary Chinese cinema as a visual art and to illustrate the ways in which it has been shaped by centuries of Chinese tradition. Jerome Silbergeld looks at the significance of gender roles, the strategies of film-makers in coping with state censorship, the translation of novels into films, the continuing attachment of film-makers to melodrama, and cinematic critiques of Maoism and post-Maoist culture. Abundantly illustrated with Chinese paintings as well as scenes from such internationally acclaimed films as *Yellow Earth*, *Red Sorghum*, *Raise the Red Lantern* and *Farewell My Concubine*, *China into Film* reveals a cinematic form at once excitingly new and deeply imbedded in traditional Chinese visual culture.

"As a study of the relationship between contemporary Chinese film and the visual legacy of Chinese arts and culture, this book is superb."