

TOURING EXHIBITION

ASHMOLEAN

MUSEUM OF ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



伟大的中华人民共和国万岁

# CULTURAL REVOLUTION

STATE GRAPHICS IN CHINA FROM THE 1960S TO 1970S

In his 1942 Talks at the Yan'an Forum, Mao Zedong declared that art should serve the worker, peasant and soldier. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) this policy was vigorously implemented. Images of the leader appeared everywhere – on banners and posters, postcards and papercuts, as well as on countless items for everyday use. The objects in this exhibition were collected in China between 1968 and 1979.

Chairman Mao's image was ubiquitous, as were the sayings in his *Little Red Book*. It has been estimated that 10.8 billion Mao texts and images were printed between 1966 and 1976. Bold, colourful posters combined text and image to promote political messages as a key propaganda tool. The compositional style was based on Soviet models



Qian Sijie, *Long Live Our Great Leader Chairman Mao*, lithograph, 1968

with strong, central, figural grouping. The predominant colour was red – the colour of the revolution – and when Mao was shown it was amid a glowing light towards which everyone faced, as a sunflower faces towards the sun.

Between 1972 and 1976 a series of national exhibitions was organised. The second of these, in 1972, included a section devoted to the art of *guohua* ('national painting'). Paintings in this category used the traditional medium of brush and ink, and revived traditional landscape styles. However these landscapes now incorporated revolutionary elements such as men and women

Heroine from the ballet 'Red Detachment of Women', papercut, 1970s

in military uniform, model workers, and symbols of modern industrial achievement.

Such images permeated all areas of everyday life and could be found reproduced on all manner of objects – including matchboxes. Before the Cultural Revolution, matchboxes had often been illustrated with images from Chinese folklore. During the 1960s and 1970s, they began to feature images promoting industrial progress, public health, and self-improvement. Even the traditional folk art of the papercut, used to decorate windows at home, promoted 'Mao Zedong Thought'.

This exhibition will introduce Cultural Revolution images on a variety of



Matchbox depicting new construction in Hebei, 1970-1980

media: colourful posters showing images of the worker, peasant and soldier, and those of Mao himself, together with quotations from his *Little Red Book*; paintings in the *guohua* style; the delicate papercut; and the humble matchbox



团结起来, 争取更大的胜利!

Yan Yongsheng, *Unite for Greater Victory!*, lithograph, 1974

## EXHIBITION COSTS

### The fee includes:

- A selection of mounted and framed Cultural Revolution propaganda
- Transport of loans from and return to Oxford (if venue is under 140 miles from the Ashmolean)
- Object preparation and condition reporting
- Object labels and wall panel
- Tour co-ordination by the Ashmolean Museum Registrars' Department

- The exhibition's curator would be available for a lecture
- A selection of 5 images for use in the venue's own press and publicity

### The following items and costs will be covered by the venue, as they arise

- 'Nail to Nail' insurance
- Crating for the works, as required
- Transport of loans from and return to Oxford (if venue is over 140 miles from the Ashmolean)
- Courier expenses

If you would like further information about this exhibition please contact: [touring.exhibitions@ashmus.ox.ac.uk](mailto:touring.exhibitions@ashmus.ox.ac.uk)

