

CHINA CROSSROADS

Sunday, August 8th, 2021, 15:30 – 17:30

Collecting “Red Relics” in Contemporary China

Emily Williams

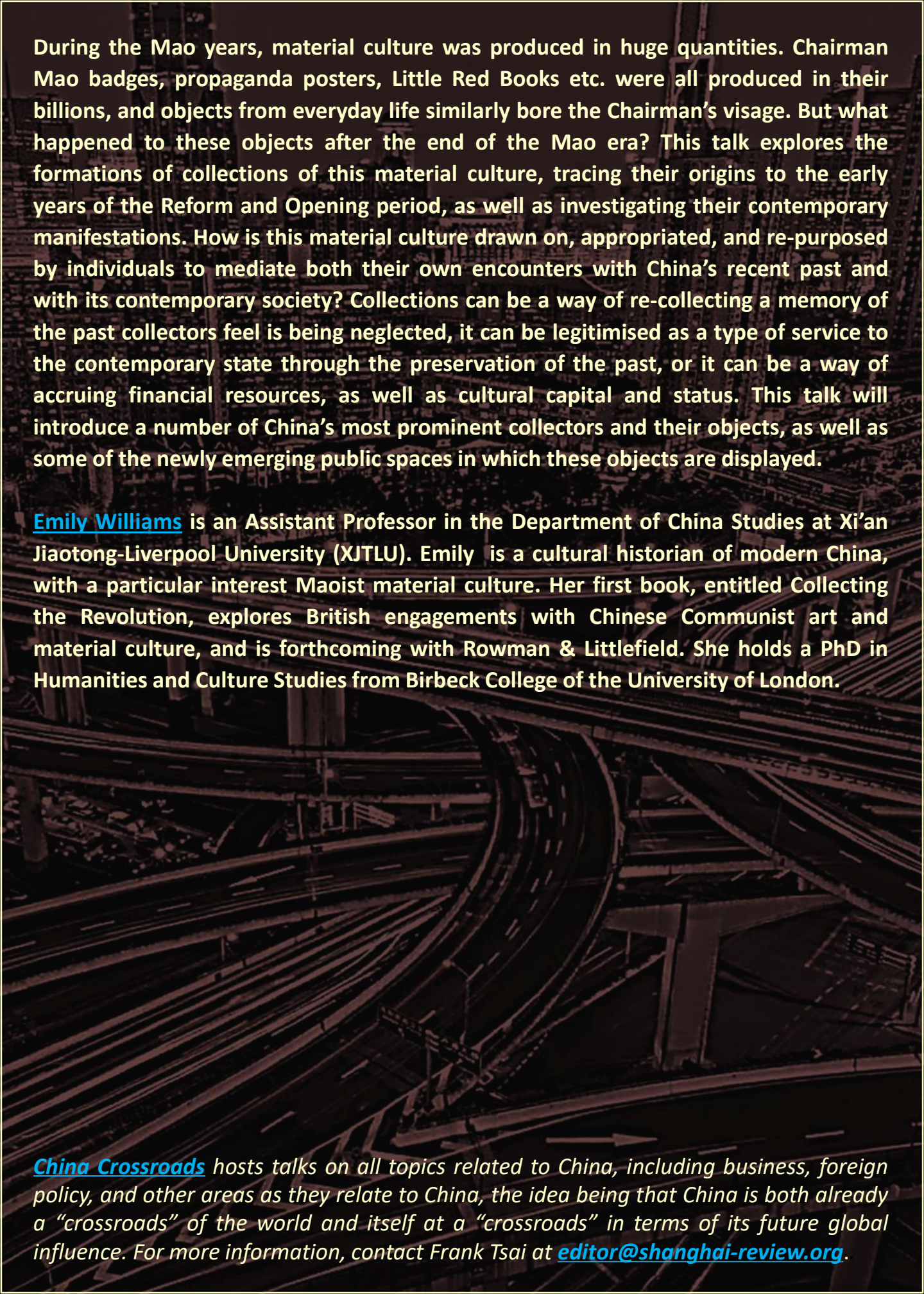
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Wooden Box | 9 Qinghai Lu close to Nanjing Xi Lu
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During the Mao years, material culture was produced in huge quantities. Chairman Mao badges, propaganda posters, Little Red Books etc. were all produced in their billions, and objects from everyday life similarly bore the Chairman's visage. But what happened to these objects after the end of the Mao era? This talk explores the formations of collections of this material culture, tracing their origins to the early years of the Reform and Opening period, as well as investigating their contemporary manifestations. How is this material culture drawn on, appropriated, and re-purposed by individuals to mediate both their own encounters with China's recent past and with its contemporary society? Collections can be a way of re-collecting a memory of the past collectors feel is being neglected, it can be legitimised as a type of service to the contemporary state through the preservation of the past, or it can be a way of accruing financial resources, as well as cultural capital and status. This talk will introduce a number of China's most prominent collectors and their objects, as well as some of the newly emerging public spaces in which these objects are displayed.

[Emily Williams](#) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of China Studies at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU). Emily is a cultural historian of modern China, with a particular interest Maoist material culture. Her first book, entitled *Collecting the Revolution*, explores British engagements with Chinese Communist art and material culture, and is forthcoming with Rowman & Littlefield. She holds a PhD in Humanities and Culture Studies from Birbeck College of the University of London.

[China Crossroads](#) hosts talks on all topics related to China, including business, foreign policy, and other areas as they relate to China, the idea being that China is both already a "crossroads" of the world and itself at a "crossroads" in terms of its future global influence. For more information, contact Frank Tsai at editor@shanghai-review.org.