



# Shanghai Comedy: From 1920s to 1960s

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A cross-disciplinary research project which probes the commencement, the development and the transition of Chinese comedy from 1920s to 1960s

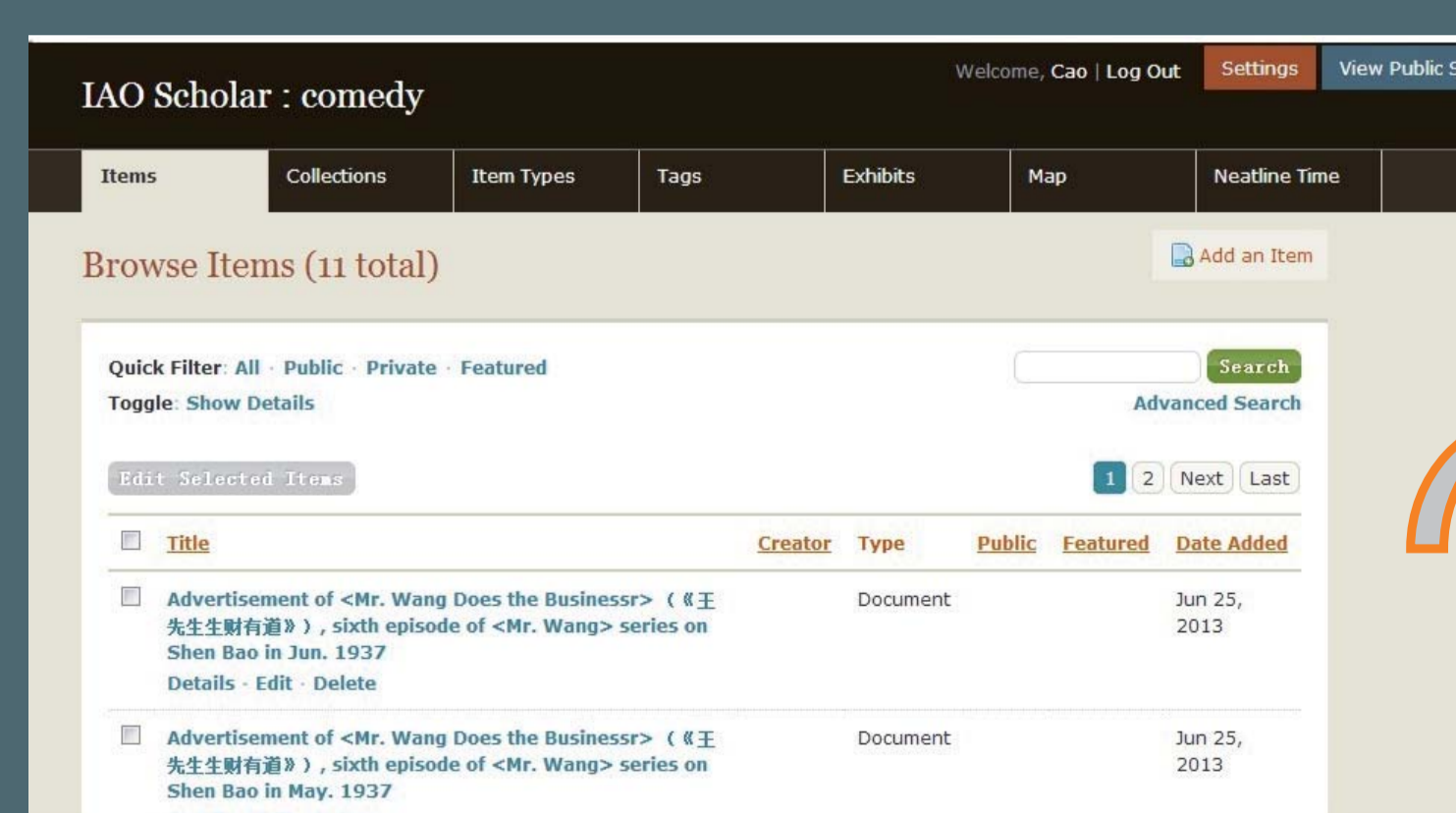
- 1) "A protean art in a protean century" (David Bordwell)  
The study of Shanghai comedy provides a bustling yet delightful path to silhouette Chinese film industry; a sketchy yet effective way to depict metropolitan life, its vibrating rhythm, its turmoil and the alteration of mentality stemmed from social-political changes.
- 2) How did the early Chinese comedy start under the prevalence of Hollywood slapstick movies in Shanghai? What is the connection between the indigenous productions and their western counterparts?
- 3) What were the crucial moments of its development? How did the comedy theory gradually engender and how was it altered?
- 4) Can the intellectual complexity presented in these comedies help us to seize the cineastes' imagination of "modernity"? What was the reaction of the local audience and to what extent their life was remolded by the activity of movie-going?

## TWO approaches adopted: Historical Method & Film Study

- 1) Historical Method: a detailed carding of the development of Shanghai comedy with the support of first-hand corpora:
  - Newspapers/fanzines/film companies' publications (e.g. Shen Bao 申報, Modern Screen 現代電影, Kaixin Special 開心特刊...)
  - Published biographies/memoirs/oral interview records (of directors, actors, film company owners...)
  - Available archives (Composite Category of Chinese Film (1906~1949) 《中国电影总目录 (1906~1949) 》, archives of Shanghai Film Industry Guild 上海电影业同业公会档案, archives of film companies...)
- 2) Film Study:
  - The way movies look narrates history as changes in film art are bound up with many other non-artistic practices. In order to further illustrate this point, concrete film analyses will also be included as case studies to explore the stylistic (dis)continuity during the process of development, especially the abrupt turnover after the foundation of P.R.C in 1949.
  - A synchronic comparison (with western counterparts) & a diachronic observation (the same comedy series: Mr. Wang Comedy Series from 30s to 40s/the same comedy director: 桑弧)
  - Main resources: film extracts, film stills/specimen

## THREE dimensions interwoven: Archival + Visual + Digital

- 1) Personal archive database: <http://scholar.bniao.org/comedy/>  
Created in Sep. 2012 for my PhD project, this platform powered by Omeka facilitates and enriches my research by providing a handy yet systematic tool of collecting and sorting documents.
- 2) A practical tool for creating online visual demonstration (webpage/blog)



- 3) Accumulation in digital era:
  - The current available online exhibits: Mr. Wang Series Collection, Hollywood Comedy Collection and more to come in the future
  - Sharing function with other PhD students of IAO
  - Network and connections with other projects: Comedy — Advertizing; Comedy — Comics ...

