

SERIES

TEACHING FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES

Teaching World Cinema

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Education



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Examining representations in film

1 Watch *Chungking Express* (Wong Kar-Wai, 1994, Hong Kong). What impression does it give you of Hong Kong? To what extent does Hong Kong seem like any other major city such as New York or London?

2 Now consider the following quotation:

Wong 'portrays a city that ... is bursting with signs and messages selling an oppressive array of consumer products. There are logos everywhere in the film: McDonalds, the OK convenience store, Del Monte canned pineapple ... Coca Cola, Manolo Blahnik shoes. ... Wong himself has said, "Our world is going to be a chain store. You can have all these products in every city. McDonalds everywhere." (City on Fire by Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, 2001, p195)

Does this statement and what Wong says himself challenge or confirm the impression you have of Hong Kong from viewing *Chungking Express*?

3 Where are these cultural influences coming from? To what extent do they threaten to erode Hong Kong's national identity?



● *Chungking Express*
(Courtesy of *bfi* Stills)

Hong Kong cinema: World cinema or Art cinema?

Watch an extract from Wong Kar-Wai's films *Chungking Express* (1994) and *In the Mood for Love* (2000).

- 1 Make a list of the characteristics of camerawork, sound, editing, direction and acting in each extract. To what extent do these characteristics reflect art or New Wave cinema?
- 2 When you see this kind of film, to what extent do you think that the director is drawing attention to himself or to the filmmaking process and the constructed-ness of the film?
- 3 To what extent are these two films identifiable by the same director? Is there a Wong Kar-Wai auteurist 'signature'?
- 4 What do you find interesting about the textual features of these films? For example, are there any technical aspects of the cinematography, editing or soundtrack that you find particularly interesting?



- 5 Wong Kar-Wai used the same cameraman (Christopher Doyle) and production designer and editor (William Chang) in both films. To what extent do they add to the artistic and 'auteurist' character of the films?

● In the Mood for Love
(Courtesy of *bfi* Stills)

Considering critical responses

The Hong Kong films rated highest by critics in 1997

Twelve critics with a specialist interest in Hong Kong cinema were asked to nominate their favourite films from the region. They were:

1. *Bullet in the Head* (John Woo 1990)
2. *Center Stage* (Stanley Kwan 1991)
3. *Chungking Express* (Wong Kar-Wai 1994)
4. *Peking Opera Blues* (Tsui Hark 1986)
5. *A Better Tomorrow* (John Woo 1986)
6. *Days of Being Wild* (Wong Kar-Wai 1991)
7. *The Killer* (John Woo 1989)
8. *Rouge* (Stanley Kwan 1987)
9. *Hard-Boiled* (John Woo 1992)
10. *A Chinese Ghost Story* (Ching Siu-tung 1987)
11. *Swordsman II* (Ching Siu-tung 1991)
12. *Ashes of Time* (Wong Kar-Wai 1994)
13. *Project A* (Jackie Chan 1983)
14. *Drunken Master II* (Lau Kar-leung 1993)
15. *Police Story* (Jackie Chan 1985)



Source: Hong Kong Babylon



● Chungking Express (both images)

(Courtesy of bfi Stills)