



new year 2017

中华人民共和国万岁

世界人民大团结万岁

best dressed

contemporary Chinese fashion

photo: Chen Man, Vogue China Oct 2009



What will 2017 bring? As a diversion from possible worries ahead, **we** continue our holiday series and delve again into contemporary Chinese culture. This year **China Policy** engages Timothy Coghlan, PRC fashion industry specialist, to update you on 'what's in' on the local scene.

craftsmanship

modern look

next gen designers

fashionistas

mainstreaming fashion

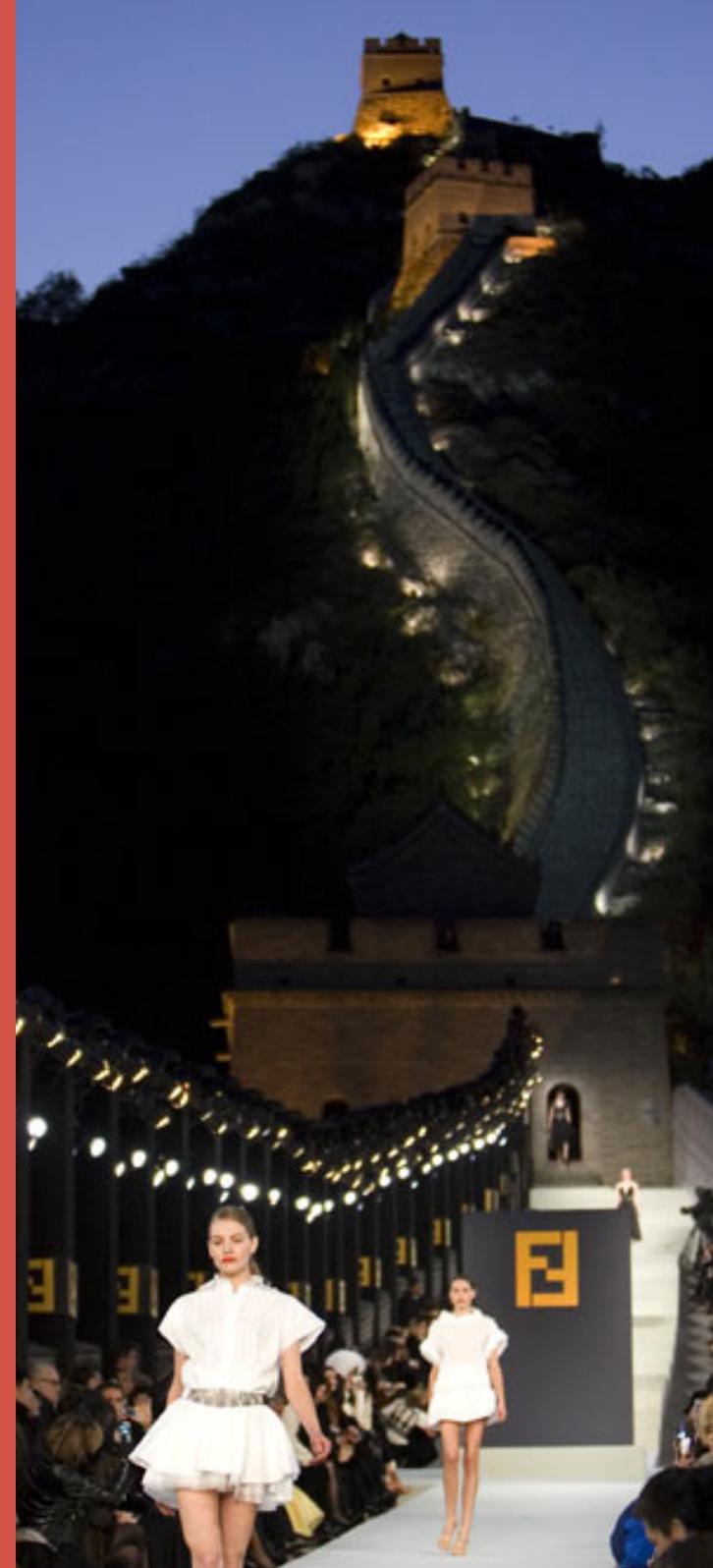
And it's the festive season. So slow down for a few moments, fish out your finery, and join us for a virtual tour of China's style-setters. *Best dressed* brings alive the fashion world as **hip flicks** did for cinema and **choice cuts** for music.

*LV does Mao: Time Magazine's 2005 China special cover featured this image
by Cuban-born US-based artist Edel Rodriguez*

Most local talent gravitates to London, Paris and New York: the fashion industry's global meccas. Yet, as exchange intensifies and local players and audiences mature, China's rise as a fashion superpower seems but a matter of time. It has all the makings: a rich heritage, talented designers, a highly skilled and modern garment industry, a huge market; even a fashion-savvy first lady.



CNN asks fashion critic Hung Huang 洪晃, Lane Crawford Hong Kong's president Andrew Keith, and Poesia's designer Chris Chang 张文轩 what it takes to create global fashion brands.



craftsmanship

手 艺

10,000 hours went into making
Guo Pei's 郭培 Blue and
Porcelain dress



in the 20th century craftspeople almost disappeared

During wars, revolutions and modernisation campaigns, traditional craft skills were seen as outdated, sometimes politically sensitive, often redundant.

Nevertheless, 77 year-old Wang Guangqin 王冠琴 still makes and embroiders silk shoes entirely by hand, in her downtown Beijing workshop. In 2007, the Ministry of Culture named Wang as a bearer of intangible culture heritage.



2013 video *The Shoemaker*, by CRI English



*mandarin square detail:
wild goose insignia of
4th rank civil official
(Qing about 1900)*

Qing dynasty emperors wore bright yellow silk robes with embroidered dragons

Mandarin squares sewn on the chests and backs of officials' plain robes signified rank through a heraldry of elegant birds for civil servants and ferocious animals for the military. Their wives chose from a range of loose-fitting, long-sleeved garments, elaborate hairpieces and tiny shoes.



festive robe worn by the Qianlong emperor around 1780

The Costume Institute
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
May 7–August 16, 2015

CHINA



THROUGH
THE
LOOKING
GLASS



The exhibition is made possible by YAHOO!
Additional support is provided by COMDÉ NAST
and several Chinese donors.

*a 2015 exhibition [China through the Looking Glass](#) curated by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York gave a
glittering glimpse of these traditions, and their influence on global fashion*



The exhibition's opening coincided with the extravagant Met Gala, where Rihanna's dress stole the show. 'I can't really walk in it without any help—but it's so worth it', she told *Vanity Fair*. 'It was handmade by one Chinese woman and it took her two years.'

the dress was by Beijing-based designer Guo Pei 郭培

Guo started in the industry in the late 1980s. Supported by 200 employees at her Rose Studio in Beijing, she now serves a global clientele.

A white gown, hand-sewn with 200,000 Swarovski crystals, embodies her craftsmanship. Song Zuying 宋祖英 wore the piece when duetting with Plácido Domingo at the 2008 Summer Olympics closing ceremony.

Guo designed a series of red, embroidered wedding dresses in response to Western styles now embraced by urban women. They want to follow Chinese tradition, but they do not know how that should look, says Guo.

Her 2016 Spring/Summer collection was launched as part of Paris Fashion Week.



2015 video Meet Guo Pei, China's First Haute Couture Designer, by the Wall Street Journal



2015 Guo Pei special by China Icons



Shang Xia, founded by Shanghai native Jiang Qiong'er 蒋琼耳, also draws inspiration from Chinese and Asian craftsmanship

Set up with Hermès in 2007, its Shanghai, Beijing and Paris stores offer exclusive, handcrafted Mongolian cashmere, Zitan wood furniture, jade jewelry, and delicate porcelain tea cups bound in gold-plated bamboo threads.



Shang Xia's cashmere products are made in traditional Mongolian style: sculptured cashmere felt with no seams, as shown in this 2014 video



Shang Xia works in partnership with over 50 handicraft workshops. This video shows part of its 2015 Spring / Summer collection.



modern look

时尚

the *qipao* was
interbellum
Shanghai's
major
contribution
to global
fashion

The modern *qipao* (or *cheongsam* in Cantonese) originated in 1920s Shanghai, the semi-colonised 'Paris of the East'. Tailors adjusted Chinese gowns to suit Western tastes, creating more revealing, closer-fitting garments.

China's top celebrity Peng Liyuan 彭丽媛 is a star in her own right

Poised and elegant, Madame Peng, former PLA diva and wife of Xi Jinping, appears frequently at the president's side. Softening his public image, she is the first Chinese leader's spouse to play such a role. Peng favours the *qipao* and other classical outfits by Chinese designers such as Ma Ke 马可, of the label Wuyong.

'Before Madame Peng', Shawy Yeh, the editorial director of *Modern Weekly*, told the Telegraph, "style" was never considered something that could have a positive impact'.



A key scene from Wong Kar-wai's 王家卫 2000 classic film *In the Mood for Love* celebrates the *qipao*. [Watch the whole film here.](#)



Peng Liyuan wore a *qipao* to the 2016 G20 opening in Hangzhou

Shanghai Tang prides itself as the pioneering luxury brand from China, with a mission to become the global curator of modern Chinese chic.

fashion and lifestyle brand Shanghai Tang lists the *qipao* as one of its twelve iconic pieces

next to cashmere cardigans with silk lining, mandarin collar polo shirts and tang jackets. Its 48 boutiques place it among the more globally successful China-inspired labels. Although Shanghai Tang honours Shanghai traditions, it is Hong Kong-based and now owned by Swiss luxury brand conglomerate Richemont.





Shanghai Tang's 2015 Spring / Summer collection



next gen designers

设计新秀

Upcoming designers are eager to hang up a global shingle. Their China connection is often more subtle.

Beijing-born, Hong Kong-educated Christine Lau
刘清扬 set up **Chictopia in Beijing** in 2012

Lau uses bright colours and a range of modern materials and techniques, including water-soluble embroidery, coloured lace and pleated chiffon. Her quirky motifs are inspired by teapots, porcelain dolls and flower pots. These pieces come from her 2017 Resort Collection.



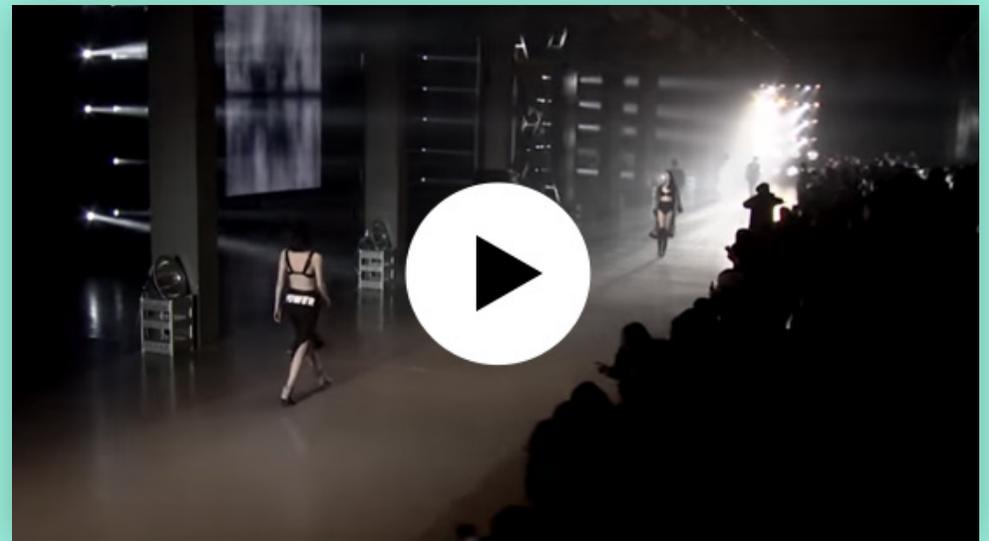


the elastic slogan bands on the shoulders and waist add a touch of androgynous rebellion to the design, says Chictopia of its [2016 Spring / Summer collection](#)

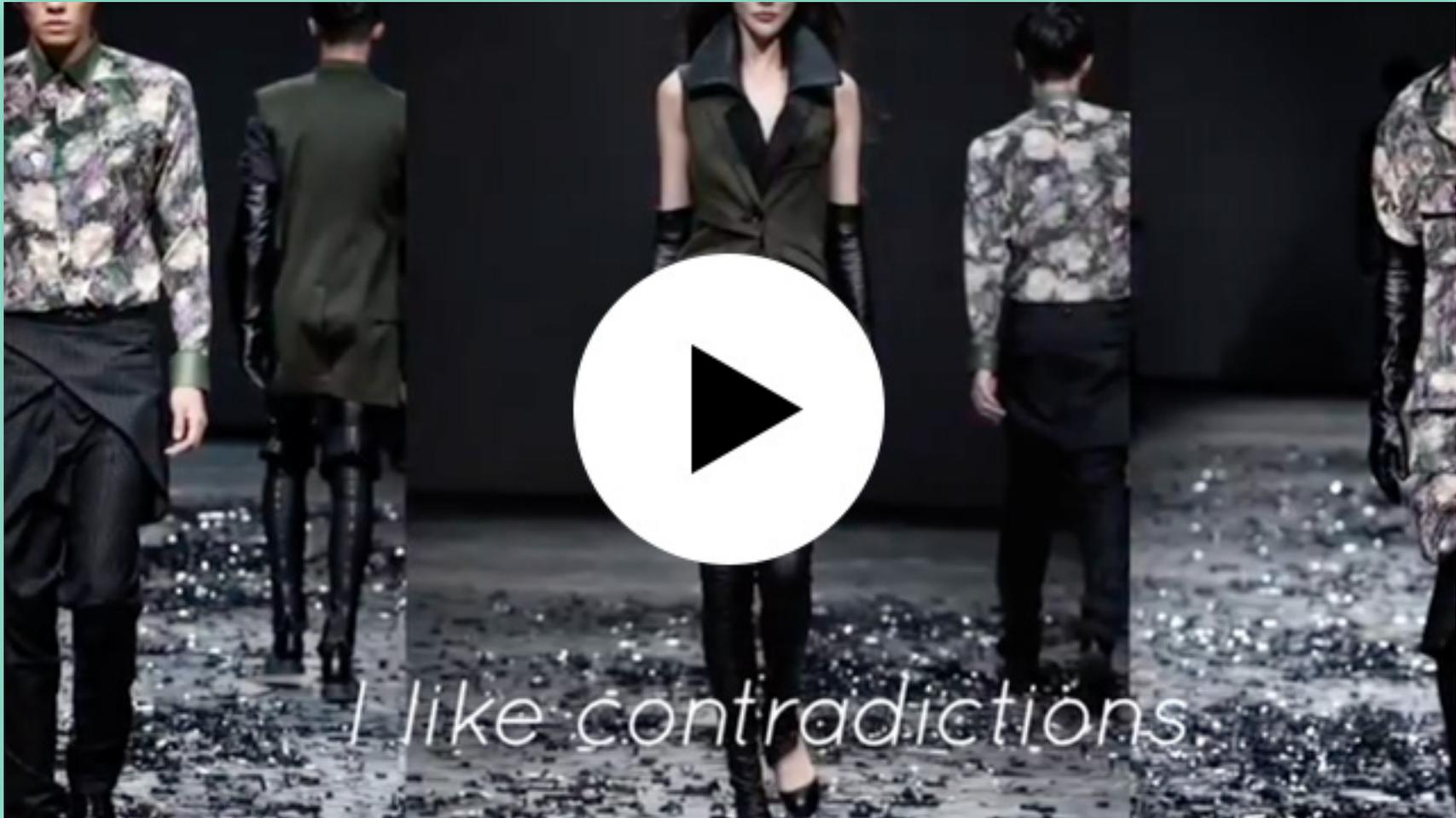


Zhang Chi 张驰: hack and slash dungeon demon meets maserati

In 2008, designer Zhang Chi 张驰 returned from fashion studies in London and Italy to set up his eponymous label. Gas masks, some embellished with Swarovski crystals, now epitomise his loud, masculine, theatrical style. Zhang has collaborated with Marvel Comics, and e-retailer JD.com selected him as one of five designers to represent it at a New York fashion event in early 2016.



'Like the city of Beijing, my style is a combination of luxury and rebellion', Zhang told The D'Vine. His [2015 Spring / Summer collection](#) presents the capital as a post-apocalyptic Gotham.



Zhang sharing 'fashion tips from the dark side' with the Frei Group in 2016

attracted by dark, mysterious and forgotten aspects of European and Chinese traditions, Masha Ma 马玛莎 wants her designs to create cultural confusion

I'm not interested in creating superficial collages. I want to create something wholly new. I'm not saying I'm there yet, but the possibilities seem to exist', she told the *Guardian*. Ma divides her time between Shanghai, where she employs 50 people, and Paris, where she has a store, and launches her collections at Paris Fashion Week. 'It's meaningless to label me a 'Chinese designer'. I spent 13 years—almost half my life—in London and Paris.' Even before her graduation from Central Saint Martins in London, Ma's chic, futuristic designs were shown at London Fashion Week and purchased by a European store.



Ma introducing her [Luxury Dadaism](#) collection at the 2013 Hong Kong Fashion Extravaganza



Masha Ma's 2017 Spring / Summer collection at the Paris Fashion Week

'Unfortunately, the phrase 'Made in China' has become synonymous with cheap, mass-produced tat', Huishan Zhang 张卉山 lamented to *Fashionista*. 'I am trying to change this and show that the country is a rich source of high quality raw materials, craftsmanship and artistic expression.'

Leaving Qingdao at 17, Zhang graduated from Central Saint Martins, like Masha Ma, and interned at Dior. Working from his London studio, Zhang has designed collections for Barneys, Harvey Nichols and Moda Operandi, amongst others.

'I mean, who does silk better than China?' asked Zhang

Producing his own material in China is a core part of Zhang's business strategy. 'I figure someone needs to tie China's reputation to luxury again; may as well be me.'



Huishan Zhang's 2017 Spring / Summer collection at the London Fashion Week



fashionistas

时尚达人

China has an increasingly diverse fashion market

Many super rich remain loyal to top luxury brands such as Chanel, Prada or Louis Vuitton. Some well-off go for disparate brands in an 'urban casual chic' blend. Others are setting up brands and subcultures of their own.

historically,
emerging powers
have revered the
cultural symbols
of waning but
awe-inspiring
predecessors

Roman culture was inspired by Greek,
British by French, American by European.
China's new rich elites buy up Western chic.

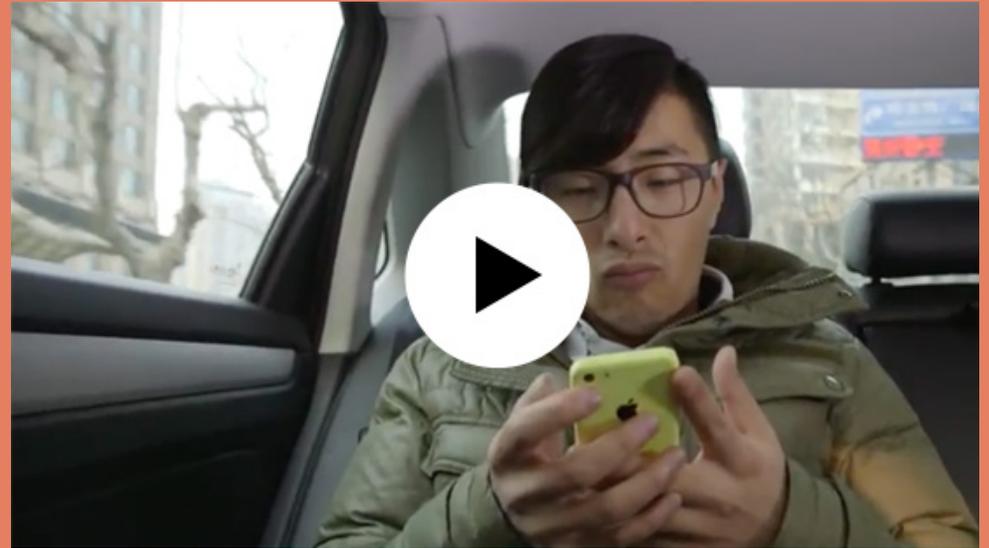


GQ's 2015 clip *The Bling Dynasty*

the smartphone is the new shop front

With physical stores struggling, electric delivery bikes have taken over the streets.

Foreign luxury brands seek new ways to distinguish themselves on portals such as JD and Tmall, where they jostle side-by-side with upcoming local brands, small boutiques and even overseas purchasing agents Wcircumventing import tariffs. The cutting edge is virtual reality, which promises customers the experience of picking out clothes in a physical store from the comfort of home. See now, buy now.



2015 Alibaba interviews about online shopping habits



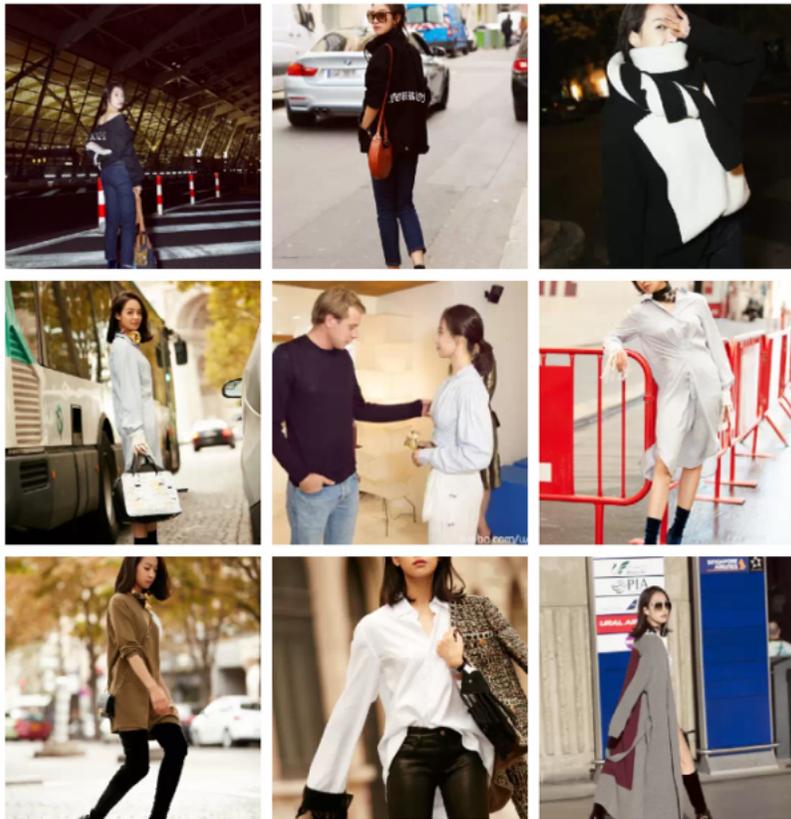
late 2016 Alibaba launches Buy+, 'the first VR online shopping experience'



宋茜 🏆

from iPhone 6s Plus

巴黎之行圆满结束！首先感谢LOEWE的邀请！更要感谢Jonathan Anderson送给我的礼物，超级喜欢😘这次的巴黎之行很开心！宝贝们，我回来啦～



#巴黎#

📷 753k

💬 31k

👍 126k

brands invite key opinion leaders to fashion events across the globe

Online news platforms like Sina Fashion pick up images and comments posted by celebrities with millions of followers on Weibo: actress Fan Bingbing 范冰冰 (54 million), singer Victoria Song 宋茜 (23 million) and model Liu Wen 刘雯 (17 million).

Song's Weibo posts during the 2016 Paris Fashion Week were reposted more than 753,000 times, giving Loewe, which sponsored her trip, more exposure in China than any other Western fashion brand during the event, reported *Jing Daily*.

China's first supermodel

In 2005, Liu Wen 刘雯 entered a modelling contest in Hunan, hoping to win a computer. By 2013 she had become the first Asian to make the Forbes's world's top 5 highest paid models' list, earning US\$4.3 million in 2013, and US\$7 million in 2014.



'It's been an honour to represent my country as a model', Liu told CNN, 'but I don't think I've ever thought of myself as an ambassador'



mainstreaming fashion 大众时尚

6,000 professionals visit
Shanghai Fashion Week's
largest trade fair

fashion events are becoming ever more diverse and media-savvy

Around 30 fashion weeks are held around the country annually, with varying levels of local government support. Beijing's is the oldest, beginning in 1997. But the city-sponsored Shanghai Fashion Week is more international, argues its vice secretary-general Lü Xiaolei 吕晓磊. Organised by the Shanghai Textile Group, the extravaganza boasts 45 catwalk shows.

Knowing they live in a media-hyped world, visitors are eager to explain their outfits at any opportunity.



Channel ViE sends its vloggers Athena Wang and Elvin Feng to the 2016 Shanghai Fashion Week



Fashion One host Kai-Li Ma 马凯莉 asks visitors of the 2016 Shanghai Fashion Week to introduce their outfits



as local governments invest in creativity, new scenes emerge across the country

'Xiamen is less crowded than Beijing, Shanghai or Shenzhen, which helps me focus on my work', says Shangguan Zhe 上官喆, who set up Sankuanz in 2007 after graduating from Xiamen University.

The city's walkability fosters interaction between folk traditions and urban youth cultures, as shown by Sankuanz's breakthrough collection 'Tian Shang' (in clouds), launched at the 2013 Shanghai Fashion Week.

Proximity to garment factories that quickly produce ready-to-wear collections is another draw. Recognising its advantages, the local government has offered Sankuanz and 260 other creatives subsidised studios in Longshan Cultural Creative Park, reports *Business of Fashion*.



2016 video 'Shangguan Zhe—Rap, Graffiti and Fashion,' by The Unreasonable



Vogue China remains an important gatekeeper and trendsetter



2014 portrait of Cheung by CNN

'When we started in 2005 there really weren't many people whose designs could hold up alongside all the international brands we featured', *Vogue China* editor in chief Angelica Cheung 张宇 told CNN.

'we are now overwhelmed with local design talent,' says Cheung

'Both from emerging independent designers and from domestic Chinese fashion brands, and, very often, we wish we had more space to feature more of them', adds Cheung. She warns that many designers now become hot before they have set up their operations properly.

the *Vogue China* team contribute articles on the local scene to international *Vogue* editions

Especially in the early years, *Vogue China* would bring in foreign photographers, stylists and models. But their stereotypes of Chinese beauty sometimes clashed with Cheung's idea of what modern Chinese women would want, reports the *Financial Times*, noting that the magazine's 1.4 million readership proves Cheung right.

For its tenth anniversary in 2015 *Vogue China* commissioned portraits of ten successful Chinese women by Peruvian photographer Mario Testino. Our final page shows an image Testino shot two years earlier for *Vogue China*, of the model Sui He 何穗 wearing items from Dolce & Gabbana, Stephen Jones, Carolina Amato, Morabito and Gianvito Rossi.



Making of Vogue China 10th Anniversary Special Issue



season's greetings

2017 continues
our arts series

new year 2016

**choice
cuts**

Chinese popular music

new year 2015

**hip flicks
for
sinophiles**

21st century Chinese cinema

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cp.observer 26 november 2016

november roundup: trumpeting multilateralism

The Trump shock brought the Party and many of its critics into agreement: Pax Americana is finished, and the 'America in decline' narrative suddenly seems vindicated. *Global Times* said the election proves Churchill wrong about democracy being the worst system of government, 'except for all the other forms'. Some see the dawn of a 'post-hegemonic' era, with China shaping a new multilateral order.



cp.public 12 april 2016

e-comm tax rules ain't so bad

General Administration of Customs (GAC) implemented a new tax regime for 1,142 categories of direct retail imports on 8 April 2016, formalising e-commerce trade under the import tax system. These new regulations are not a strike against foreign exporters, but a regulatory lever to build markets, and develop logistics chains and consumer protections.



cp.public 22 august 2016

shadow boxing: curbing risky growth

CBRC circulated draft controls on commercial banks' wealth management products for comment in late July 2016. More ambitious than the abandoned December 2014 proposals, they show a shift in priority from spurring growth to controlling risk.



cp.brief 1 june 2016

paying for greying: re-evaluating China's pension system

Ageing pressure has increased the urgency of pension reform. Growing urgency has sparked fundamental debates among leading scholars and policymakers about how to make the pension system fairer, stronger and more sustainable.