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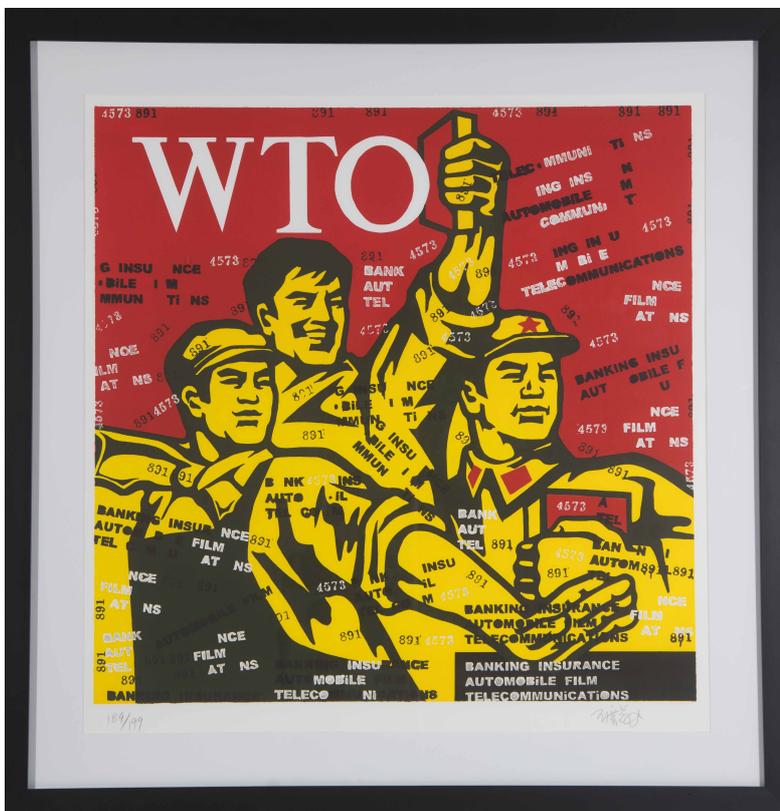
Diversity & Art: A Virtual Tour

Wang Guangyi

China (b. 1957)

WTO

from the *Great Criticism* series, 2006



Work

Wang Guangyi has worked in a variety of media, including oil paintings and sculpture, but is best known for his *Great Criticism* series of paintings and prints. The series combines the style of Maoist-era propaganda posters with logos from companies, such as Coca-Cola, Ferrari, Pepsi, Nike, Porsche, even Walt Disney, and institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO).

In essence, the *Great Criticism* series appropriates and refashions historical red and yellow Chinese propaganda posters into paintings and prints, combining them with references to western style luxury status symbols, highlighting the antithetical trajectories clashing with one another as China moves forwards to the future. Another element is the pervasive presence of numbers throughout the repurposed posters, reminiscent of the numbered licenses required during the Cultural Revolution when producing an image for public consumption, numbers that allude to restrictions imposed on the creative process during Wang's formative years.

About the Artist

One of China's best-known contemporary artists, Wang Guangyi is known as a leader of China's new art movement that began after 1989. He was born in the city of Harbin, China in 1957, and studied in the Department of Oil Painting at the China Academy of Fine Arts, where he was taught to paint in Soviet-style Realism. After graduating, he taught only briefly, as he did not like the conservative educational methods.

Wang credits his working-class parents for helping him expand his horizons and unleash his imagination, despite their limited means. His father, who worked for the railroad, exposed Wang to new places, helping him become curious about the world. His mother's crafts, especially paper-cutting, helped him recognize the power of art to impact one's environment and perspective. Adept in paper-cut designs, as many are in China, Wang's mother adorned their somber living quarters with brightly hued papercuts. Her "window flowers" placed across the home's window panels added not only color, but also formed kaleidoscopes that filtered in bursts of light that varied with the direction of the sun and time of day. This was an early lesson in art. Also imbued with symbols and images that marked changes in season, celebrations, or rites of passage, these "window flowers," also helped Wang recognize the power of art to convey stories and meaning.

Wang's work is widely acclaimed around the world. He has had many exhibitions throughout China, and in many other countries, including the United States, Switzerland, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Singapore, Spain, Italy, Korea, Mexico, Brazil, Australia, Russia, Indonesia, and Belgium.