

DATONG: THE GREAT SOCIETY 《大同：康有為在瑞典》 ---

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recipient of 南方都市報 **Southern Metropolitan Daily's**
2011 Shenzhen/Hong Kong Humane Life
Movie of the Year Award

for "dusting off hidden history, returning an entire, real body
to our reflections...it sheds the grand narrative and focuses instead
on the singular destiny of Kang Youwei, through whom the film
examines some crucial issues in that pivotal era..."

By presenting an alternative perspective during the centennial of
the 1911 Xinhai Revolution, it has returned to our times
fuller memories and humanity;
it has patched up gaps in our history of thoughts."

"Kang Youwei is the most creative major thinker in modern Chinese history."

Li Zehou 李澤厚, philosopher/author of

An Inquiry into Modern Chinese Thoughts 中國近代思想論」作者

[a scholar] of great intelligence and courage...Kang Youwei (1858–1927) saw himself as a new sage capable of saving the Chinese people...Evans Chan's Datong: The Great Society is a film on Kang, his family, and fellow reformers. The Swedish angle is indeed an interesting and unusual way to bring Kang back to life.

Jonathan Spence 史景遷, author of *The Search for Modern China* "尋找現代中國" 作者

Exciting, inventive, bold, postmodern!

Ann Hui, veteran award-winning Hong Kong filmmaker

The official histories espoused by the Chinese Communist Party, and Taiwan's Nationalists (Guomindang), grounded in revolutionary and ethno-nationalist perspectives, often cast Kang Youwei in a negative light, even though Kang was a pivotal figure in imperial China's transition into a modern nation-state. Evans Chan's two Kang films – Datong: The Great Society and Two or Three Things about Kang Youwei -- mobilize solid historical research and imaginative artistry to weave a moving portrait of Kang. These two films not only detail Kang's life, influence, and the powerful bond between him and his remarkable daughter Kang Tung Pih, but also enable us to reflect, from the pioneering constitutional reformer's perspective, on some root causes of China's turmoil in this past century.

--- **Max Ko-wu Huang** 黃克武 Director, Institute of Modern History

Academia Sinica 中央研究院 近史所所長

Datong: The Great Society pulsates with sweeping energy. Appearing during the centennial of the 1911 Xinhai Revolution, the film uncovers some strikingly new ideas that provoke deep reflections about Chinese modernity. Among recent Hong Kong films, *Datong's* unique voice cannot be ignored. One is grateful that this film has been made.

Ernest Chan 陳志華, President, Hong Kong Film Critics Society 香港電影評論學會會長

A fascinating docudrama...about the life and ideas of Kang Youwei (1858-1927), arguably China's most creative thinker in modern times...It also dwells on Kang's one big idea, Datong (Great Unity), calling for the realization of a utopian society in which all boundaries (including those between political states, between economic and social classes, and between the sexes) have been dissolved. And it speculates on the influence of this idea later on upon Mao and the Communist revolution, and on its possible relevance today.

Edward Rhoads, Professor Emeritus, Chinese history, University of Texas at Austin

A must see for anyone concerned about the future of China.

Freddie Wong 黃國兆, Apple Daily 蘋果日

報, December 13, 2011

*A powerful and affecting docu-drama, **Datong: The Great Society** tackles themes central to modern China ranging from reform/revolution to sexuality, gender and ethnic relations. The subtle ways of remaining intensely Chinese while becoming thoroughly cosmopolitan are explored through Kang's daughter Kang Tung Pih (1887-1969), as well as the narrator of the film -- renowned actress-choreographer Chiang Ching, who lives in Sweden, where Kang spent a few years of his exile. On one hand, a Sweden full of stately buildings and pastoral vistas. On the other, a China in turmoil and ruins. One could be reminded of Francis Fukuyama's recent question of how "we" -- not just contemporary Chinese -- can "get to Denmark," which seems a question Kang himself would have appreciated.*

Peter Zarrow 沙培德, author of *After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State, 1885-1924*

*Written and directed by Evans Chan, a scholar-artist, **Datong: The Great Society** offers a strikingly new vision....The film's title is "Datong," obviously referring to the "Book of Datong" by Kang Youwei... whose vision of reforming China competed against Dr. Sun Yatsen's advocacy of revolution..."Book of Datong" is a book much ahead of its time...and Evans Chan's film pursues Kang's contemporary relevance...The film's narrator is a well-known personality in the art world in her own right -- the choreographer Chiang Ching. This narrator's sympathy probably lies not so much with Kang, than with Kang's daughter Kang Tung Pih, an enormously talented pioneer of women's rights in China. This feminist angle has enriched the film, lending it warmth and humanity. The interviewees are all notable experts in Asia and Euro-America; their participation alone warrants interest in the field of Chinese studies...I wish that this film's artistic merits can be recognized, while creating discussions...and reflections on the meaning of the centennial of the 1911 Revolution...in the cultural world of the three Chinas of Hong Kong, Taiwan and the PRC.*

Leo Ou Fan Lee 李歐梵, Professor Emeritus of Chinese Literature, Harvard University
& Professor of Humanities, Chinese University, Hong Kong

*Liu Kai Chi, always an virtuoso, plays Kang Youwei in **Datong: The Great Society**, a remarkable film that presents a unique exploration of Kang and a century of Chinese history. In an unusual style blending documentary and theatre, this film by Evans Chan is chock-full of material and issues that are worth revisiting and debating. A non-commercial, independent production, but of particular importance...because a "Hong Kong film" that is so engaged/engaging -- with history and politics -- and so creative is all too rare.*

Shek Kei, *Ming Pao* (Hong Kong), May 15, 2011

performs a valuable service in informing Chinese and foreigners about a key historical figure who has largely been forgotten by history...

Mark O'Neill, *South China Morning Post*, Oct 31, 2011

*timely and necessary...politically imaginative...the film's courageous evocations of alternative pasts and possible futures...and a compelling invitation to engage sympathetically with a number of interconnected and moving life stories, **Datong: The Great Society** is cutting edge, hybridized documentary filmmaking at its absolute best.*

Mette Hjort, Honorary Professor at the Centre for Modern European Studies, University of Copenhagen; and Head of Visual Studies at Lingnan University, Hong Kong

*Full of fascinating information from a turbulent Chinese century – did you know that modern China's first major political reformer Kang Youwei lived on an island off Stockholm from 1904 to 1908, or that the renowned choreographer/actress Chiang Ching also lives on a Swedish isle now? The imagery of the island and the whole idea of finding oneself somewhere else -- in every sense of that phrase – makes **Datong: The Great Society** a very moving film. The life of this great Southern intellectual/utopian philosopher caught between admiration for the West, exile, and patriotic self-sacrifice, resonates so strongly with the struggles of China's diasporic intelligentsia today.*

Chris Berry, Professor, Film and Television Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London

*unclassifiable...majestic! Kang Youwei advocated gender equality...accepted homosexuality, and was seemingly more accepting of a multi-ethnic China than Dr. Sun Yatsen...his ideas and the questions he raised have not dated at all...**Datong: The Great Society** is bound to be a touchstone film for reconsidering China's 1911 revolution.*

--- 信報 *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, Nov 2, 2011

This film blends...with tremendous virtuosity...history, literature and theatre, allowing us to eavesdrop on the dreams of a tragic searcher...a rare masterpiece in the history of Chinese cinema.

Esther Cheung 張美君, Head of Department of Comparative Literature,
University of Hong Kong

*The combination of interwoven life stories, historical and ideological exploration, intellectual analysis and artistic creativity make **Datong** irresistible...a significant addition to Chan's already impressive filmography. The performances are excellent, and Lindzay Chan is absolutely amazing.*

---**Michael Ingham**, Professor of English
and Theatre, Lingnan University.

Datong: The Great Society is an extraordinary and dauntless undertaking, and a moving film about Kang Youwei – as played by the remarkable Liu Kai Chi -- and Kang's search for Datong, the utopia in the Confucian tradition.

--- **Russell Leong**, Editor, Amerasia, UCLA

*Evans Chan's docu-drama, **Datong: The Great Society**, is an elegant object-lesson in the overlapping complexities of history. Its fluid intermingling of documentary, theatre, dance, memory, analogy, and travelogue in itself is an important statement about the simultaneous unraveling of politics and history on many levels -- transnationally, and through the interaction of innumerable people and ideas. There is a gracefulness about the lyrical reminiscences by Kang Youwei, China's earliest constitutional reformer, of his four fateful years in Sweden and his fervour to maintain his political organization to change China; the dramatic anguish of Kang's daughter during the persecutions of the Cultural Revolution; and the contemporary – moving and unforgettable -- reflections of the leading exilic choreographer/actress Chiang Ching, herself living in Sweden a century later. Enlivened by interviews with well-known scholars in the field, the film leaves one with a deep appreciation of the intensity of the debates and struggles that fuelled - and in Kang's case, sought to moderate and avoid - the century of violent revolution, ethnic discords and political constraint that Chinese citizens are still undergoing.*

Robert Barnett, Founder and Director,
Modern Tibetan Studies Program, Columbia University.

FURTHER INFO ON **DATONG** CAN BE FOUND AT
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