

Book Review: The Panda Man and the Anti-Counterfeiting Hero: Art

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With the onset of economic liberalization in most countries around the world, various concerns have emerged in the consumer markets. A number of laws and regulations that govern operations in the global markets has been stipulated. However, things have not been smooth in all markets. As Yin Wong points out, Chinese consumer markets have been facing serious global contemporary concerns related to counterfeit, authenticity of businesses, copyright and negative behavior among consumers. The quality and authenticity of products available in the Chinese markets are questionable, and this has generated a bad picture about Chinese-made products outside the country. Zhao Bandi, aka the “Panda Man, and Wang Hai, aka the “Anti-Counterfeiting Hero” are prominent figures who have attempted to bring out problems of the Chinese markets. For instance, in 1999 Zhao Bandi produced a cartoon denouncing fake products being availed in the Chinese markets. Consumer deception is high as fake products are presented in the markets as clones.

Yin Yong attributes fake products with rampant evils of global capitalism and moral failings of the Chinese communities. Panda Man is concern about counterfeit products being produced in the country. Through his artistic works, Panda Man passed a strong message about quality and authenticity of the Chinese products before 1990s. Together with Anti-Counterfeiting Hero, Panda Man advocate for laws that safeguard consumerist society in China. For a long period, consumers in China had no rights. They could not argue even when they are offended. Consumer protection law had not been passed, hence, producers exploited the customers or consumers. Through posters in Beijing, Panda Man reveals consumer problems and anxiety. He deftly portrays the significance of new legal and regulatory frameworks that would ascend China to World Trade Organization in 2001.

Art plays various roles in shaping culture of societies. Art has been utilized as an instrument for championing positive changes in the society. Through public art practice, Panda Man has effectively engaged with political, social and economic issues. The artistic approach used by the Panda Man and the Anti-Counterfeit Hero provided a platform dramatic developments in various sectors of Chinese societies. In the West, the use of commercial objects has been employed to portray important sub-cultural and countercultural aspects. According to Yin Yong, artistic appropriations have been used as means of addressing plights of people due to certain cultural or political values. In most cases, courts in the contemporary society are ineffective in addressing issues faced by people.

The Panda Man also used his artistic work to portray the realities of public health sector in China. The art written “BLOCK SARS, DEFEND THE HOMELAND” portrays the Panda Man wearing paper facemasks. Through this image, he informs the Chinese authorities of looming medical crisis that had invaded political scene. His artistic works propelled him to fame. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Panda Man gained popularity in various parts of the world. His artwork crisscrossed the public sphere in visual strategies. Both Zhao Bandi and the Anti-Counterfeit Hero blurred high. Their policies regarding various consumers became the foundation for the establishment of consumer rights and interests in the modern world. Their great work earned them celebrity names. Zhao Bandi encountered realities of lack of authenticity in the Chinese markets. His image in the SARS poster was reproduced and used as a platform for Beijing news without his permission. It was used both in magazines and television programs. This issue aggravated when the artist attempted to contact the companies, which had used the image. This issue became a precedent for addressing copyright issues in the country.

Wang Hai is another prominent figure who strongly advocated for protection of consumer rights and interests in China. He was aware that substandard products were available in the market and that no legal process was available to address the matter. He chose to be consumer activist by appropriating the law through legal activism. Through journals, Wang criticized the government and judiciary for being reluctant to address these concerns. He is accredited for the inception of Consumer Rights Day. Like Zhao Bandi, Wang's appropriations have had a bearing on Chinese political, social and economic scene.