

Liverpool Film Seminar

2015 – 2016 series

Every year, Liverpool Film Seminar invites six experts to deliver a series of talks. Topics vary greatly and the series does not focus on a specific aspect of film. Instead, a range of genres and approaches are celebrated, from historical reach to the internet's impact on cinematic material.

Dr Mark Gallagher (University of Nottingham)

Tony Leung Chiu-Wai: Acting Sexy in Hong Kong and China

Described by one publication as looking “like sex in a white suit” (Ko 2001), Chinese actor Tony Leung Chiu-Wai has since the early 1980s enjoyed a reputation as a sexually attractive figure. Internationally distributed films such as *Chungking Express* (1994), *In the Mood for Love* (2004), and *Lust, Caution* (2007) along with many Hong Kong romantic comedies, thrillers and martial-arts films have capitalized on his physical appeal and on his ability to perform as a sexually charismatic man.

This paper investigates Leung as a regional and global star, focusing on attributes of his acting that convey sex appeal or have been received as sexy. A lead actor of scores of genre films and television series in his native Hong Kong, Leung has acquired an international reputation based on roles in efforts from filmmakers such as Wong Kar-Wai, Ang Lee and Hou Hsiao-Hsien. Leung thus appears a popular star in a regional Asian context but a more rarefied, art-cinema performer internationally. Despite his bifurcated reputation, his sex appeal provides a powerful symbolic currency bankable in local as well as global contexts.

Through attention to the highly legible yet difficult-to-quantify category of sex appeal, I identify features of Leung's acting and stardom that inform his overall career activity. With attention to a screen star's performance history and long-term creative trajectory, this paper seeks to account for the complex performative and cultural phenomenon of cinematic sex appeal.

Biography:



Mark Gallagher is Associate Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Nottingham. He is the author of *Tony Leung Chiu-Wai* (BFI/Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming), *Another Steven Soderbergh Experience: Authorship and Contemporary Hollywood* (University of Texas Press, 2013) and *Action Figures: Men, Action Films and Contemporary Adventure Narratives* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), and co-editor of *East Asian Film Noir* (I.B. Tauris, 2015)