



**Remarks as Prepared for Charles Rivkin
Asia Society's U.S.-China Film Summit 2017
November 1, 2017**

Good morning ladies and gentleman.

Thank you, Jonathan, for your kind words – and thank you to the entire team at the Asia Society for everything you do to celebrate and advance the cultural relationship between the United States and China.

In particular, thank you for your work in helping to deepen the collaboration between our two countries' film industries, and highlighting, more broadly, our shared history and passion for creative storytelling.

Today, as we reflect on the evolving bond between Hollywood and China – as we consider the challenges ahead and the opportunities yet to seize – I want to take a moment, first, to emphasize the fundamental significance of storytelling through film and television.

For a moment, I want you to imagine a world without the strong partnership between the U.S. and Chinese film industries. Where Chinese audiences couldn't be swept away with Dorothy to the Land of Oz or join Luke Skywalker in a galaxy far, far away...where they couldn't soar on a broomstick through Harry Potter's world of wizardry or run across the country with Forrest Gump.

I want you to envision a world where American audiences couldn't fly with the warriors of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* or witness Jackie Chan's death-defying stunts. Where they couldn't experience the drama of *Farewell my Concubine* or be transported to the action of the smash hit, *Wolf Warrior 2*.

In this hypothetical world without shared stories, audiences are, of course, worse off. But without the invaluable exchange of ideas and culture through film and television, so are our nations as a whole.

Fortunately, such a world is an imaginary one.

In reality, our films are global – and both the United States and China celebrate a rich history of shared storytelling.

From the first collection of Chinese poetry in the 11th century BC to the first motion picture in 1894 in New York, the tradition of creativity in both China and America runs deep. Throughout our histories, stories – specifically films – have been used to define our people, our challenges, and our aspirations to the world.

Consider satirical films such as *I am Not Madame Bovary* from the acclaimed Feng Xiaogang—who is being honored here tonight for his creative accomplishments.

Meanwhile in America, Charlie Chaplin created cinema's first important political satire, *The Great Dictator*, in 1940. *Philadelphia* and *Boys Don't Cry* opened national discussions on sexual identity and human rights. And in more recent examples, *Spotlight* and *The Big Short* tackled national scandals.

These examples—and the indelible connection between creativity and our cultural identities—should ground our conversations about the future of our industries.

I say this as a representative of American film and television and its global impact, but also from a personal level.

Early in my career, I had the opportunity to work for Jim Henson—the founder of Jim Henson Entertainment and the creator of the Muppets.

Jim used to say, “Media—if used properly—can be an enormous source of good in the world.”

I adamantly believe that to be true.

Consider the Muppets. They raised the level of preschool education in America. They taught kids their ABCs—but also to respect others, to be more tolerant, and to dream big.

They also inspired children around the world, including millions across China.

In the years since Big Bird—or Zhima Jie as he is known in Chinese—first visited China, the Muppets have encouraged critical-thinking and problem-solving, led outreach in areas impacted by natural disasters, and introduced children to global cultures.

This is just one small example of our creative sectors' collective influence. As film and television in China and the United States continues to flourish, so do the prospects for further joint endeavors—and mutual successes.

Going forward, we must champion programs like the one I had the privilege to experience firsthand earlier this week.

On Monday, I spent the evening with four young Chinese filmmakers, who are here in Los Angeles as part of the Paramount Pictures-China Filmmaker Exchange Program.

The week-long, intensive program teaches emerging Chinese creators how films are developed, produced, and distributed in the American studio system, and in turn, allows them to share their visions for the Chinese industry with their hosts.

This year's filmmakers are among some of the most promising who have made the journey to Los Angeles since the program's inception in 2013. Many have come following standout performances at the Chinese box office and many have gone on to future successful endeavors.

Over dinner, Cheng Er shared the honor of being awarded Best Debut Direct and Best Film at the Chinese Media Awards in 2013 and Xie Dongshen reflected on working with the esteemed director and producer, Zhang Yimou. While Zhang Mo, who in 2016 released her highly successful film *Suddenly Seventeen*, enlightened me with the age demographic of audiences in China that she aims to reach and entertain.

This program is among the many workshops, panels, and pitching competitions on topics as far ranging as 3D filmmaking, animation, and web-movies that have proven incredibly successful at improving dialogue and deepening understanding between our two industries.

But our relationship is not limited to talent development.

More and more, we are working directly with our Chinese counterparts to create, produce, and distribute creative content.

Indeed, last year, our two industries collaborated on an historic high of ten co-productions. And this year, we celebrate the 7th anniversary of our China International Coproduction Film Screenings, where we partner with SAPPRFT to showcase the pick of feature film co-productions.

Taken together, these partnerships, programs, and co-productions are paying significant cultural dividends, encouraging mutual understanding and demonstrating that our future is a shared one.

They are also stimulating enormous economic opportunity.

Consider the numbers in China, alone.

Last year, the box office hit \$6.6 billion, making it the largest market outside of the United States – and one that continues to grow. In cities large and small, the country is adding 20 more cinema screens every day, and box office revenues are on pace to surpass \$8 billion by the end of the year.

Such tremendous success is creating high-quality jobs and driving economic growth across the country.

In fact, according to a new report from Oxford Economics, in 2016, the film and television industries in China supported more than four million high-quality jobs. In total, they contributed more than \$86.3 billion to the economy in 2016 – an increase of nearly \$22 billion in just two short years.

And the same economic benefits hold true here in the United States. Today, the film and television industry supports two million high-quality jobs, paying \$134 billion in total wages and generating a positive services trade surplus of \$13.3 billion.

These numbers tell an impressive story. Our two film markets have been undeniably successful – and the future holds even greater promise.

However, seizing potential growth – and overcoming the challenges ahead – will require cooperation.

To start, we must continue to open the Chinese market and expand trade between our two industries.

The 2012 MOU has been instrumental in doing this; it has taken the U.S.-Chinese relationship to new places, and we hope the renegotiations currently underway will build on this foundation.

We must also work together to reduce piracy and the theft of creative content that threatens the livelihoods of millions and inhibits our ability to share great stories with the world.

Fortunately, countries around the world, including China and the United States, are taking steps to protect copyright and reduce piracy.

In China, for instance, the film industry's promotion law lays the foundations for penalizing offenses, such as illegal camcording in theaters and box office fraud.

While in the United States, we are not only working closely with law enforcement to take both civil and criminal actions, we are also offering audiences more legal choices than ever before – with expanded access to creative content where, when, and on any device they want.

But just as piracy is a global issue – so too must be our response.

In June, content companies from markets all around the world, launched the Alliance for Creativity and Entertainment. Through collaboration at a scale never before seen in the fight against piracy, ACE offers an important dimension to addressing this problem.

As we look forward, we are eager for Asian content companies, especially Chinese ones, to join these efforts – because the fact is, when we work together, we can do so much more to advance creativity.

So, as we consider the future, we must remember that from the very earliest poems and performances, storytelling has been intrinsically important to both our cultural identities.

As the esteemed Chinese director, John Woo, articulated so well, "I can use a movie as a language. Not only can it send a good message, but I can let people know about my thinking and how I see the world."

Indeed, the language of film and television is a universal one.

By building on this common foundation, we can bring audiences around the world more of the content they love. We can continue to create jobs and drive economic growth. And we can represent our ideals to the world, while better understanding the values of others.

So I thank you for inviting me to be here with you this morning. I look forward to many, many more years of strong partnership between the Chinese and U.S. film industries.

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