

**Berry, Chris**, University of London, United Kingdom

### **Secular Enchantment and Public Screens in Shanghai**

Moving image screens of various sizes have proliferated across Shanghai over the last decade. How should we understand their function and effect? This paper argues that moving image screens bestow an element of “secular enchantment,” but that the form and effect of that enchantment depends upon the particular context in which the screens are embedded. In this way, the paper participates in the recent return to an interest in enchantment, not as opposed to modernity but as an integral part of it. Where some scholars have been interested in faith in the supernatural and the religious within modernity, this paper is interested in the secular enchantment that inheres in our fascination with the apparently moving image as it seems to mimic life. To illustrate the argument that secular enchantment is deployed in different ways in different contexts, two case studies are presented. In the Shanghai Museum of Science and Technology, moving image screens are used to conjure up curiosity in the magic of science (“who do they do that?”) as part of an educational experience. At the Pentagon Plaza (Wujiaochang) intersection--designated as the centre of public life for 2 million of Shanghai’s inhabitants, they are part of a leisure and retail-driven lightscape that functions like a beacon.