

**AHIS 503 Categories and Collections**  
**Ideas of Asia in the Museum**  
**Mondays, 2-5 p.m., VKC 379**  
**Fall, 2014**

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Since its inception in eighteenth-century Europe, the museum has provided modern nation-states with a powerful tool to display and define their own cultures and those from around the world. This seminar will take the museum as the critical lens through which to examine the collecting and display of Asian art in relation to conceptualizations of Asia that gained currency in the cultural and geopolitical milieu of modernity. The dual focus allows for in-depth inquiries into interregional and intraregional connections that manifested in the workings of the art market, museological practices, and art-historical discourses across Europe, the Americas, and Asia from the nineteenth century to the present day. Through a series of case studies, we will consider some of the fundamental questions in the history of collecting and display: How did an assemblage of objects represent a culture? Why was it necessary to frame the representation of a country in relation to that of a region? Why were certain countries regarded as better partners in articulating a shared identity of Asian nations than others? In what ways did object types affect the decision to include and/or exclude particular cultures in an assemblage? Who were involved in determining the cultural meanings of these objects, and who were the audiences?

This seminar offers a semester-long preview of an international symposium that the instructor is co-organizing with colleagues at Los Angeles County Museum of Art, to be held at USC and LACMA in January 2015. Some of the speakers from this event will meet with the class to discuss their paper topics and related readings either on campus or at the museum.

**ASSIGNED TEXTS**

1. David Carrier, *Museum Skepticism: A History of the Display of Art in Public Galleries* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006). Available for purchase in the USC Bookstore.
2. Online Course Reader. Available on Blackboard.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. Reading Analyses and Short Oral Presentations

Each student will be asked to write four analyses on selected readings throughout the semester. At the appropriate class meeting, you will introduce the reading(s) and lead the discussion. The written version is due a week after the class discussion, so that you will have time to reflect further on the subject. The analysis should include a brief summary of the main argument in the reading(s), the author's position on particular issues, his/her methodology, and

your own critique of the strengths and weaknesses. It is typically three to four pages long, double-spaced.

## 2. Research Project

The main assignment for this course is a research project on a topic of your choice (20–25 pages). You may choose one from a list provided by the instructor (to be distributed in class in Week 6) or propose your own. In either case, you are required to discuss your topic with the instructor during office hours by Week 8. A proposal (3 pages) with bibliography is due in Week 10, at which time each student is to present his/her topic in class. A formal presentation of the paper is scheduled in Weeks 14 and 15. After incorporating comments and suggestions generated in the class discussion after presentation, a final written report is due by Friday, December 12.

### **Grading:**

Reading analyses (written reports), 4 x 5%=20%

Attendance and participation (including short oral presentations), 20%

Research project, 60% (total)

Proposal, 10%

In-class presentation, 20%

Written report, 30%

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Week One**

August 25: Course Overview

### **Week Two**

September 1: Labor Day: No Class

### **Week Three**

September 8: The Place of Art Museum in History

- Carrier, *Museum Skepticism* (2006).

### **Week Four**

September 15: Conceptualizations of Asia in History

- Duara, “Asia Redux” (2010).
- Lewis and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents* (1997), 47–72.
- Hevia, *English Lessons* (2003), 156–183.
- Saaler and Szpilman, eds., *Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History, Vol. 1* (2011), excerpts.

### **Week Five**

September 22: Collecting Asian Art

- Chang, *Travel, Collecting and Museums of Asian Art in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (2013).
- Thomas, “The Looting of Yuanming Yuan and the Translation of Chinese Art in Europe” (2008).

- Little, ed., *Chinese Paintings from Japanese Collections* (2014).
- Brandt, “Objects of Desire: Japanese Collectors and Colonial Korea” (2000).

### **Week Six**

September 29: Ethnographic Museums

- Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (1988), 215–251.
- Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (2001), 149–198.
- Pai, “Capturing Visions of Japan's Prehistoric Past” (2009).

### **Week Seven**

October 6: Visit LACMA Exhibit “Princely Traditions and Colonial Pursuits in India”

- Mathur, *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display* (2007), 52–79.
- Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (2004), 43–82, 175–204.

### **Week Eight**

October 13: First Public Museums of Asian Art

- Clunas, “Oriental Antiquities/Far Eastern Art” (1994).
- March, *China and Japan in Our Museums* (1929).
- Cohen, *East Asian Art and American Culture* (1992), 3–34.
- Conn, “Where Is the East? Asian Objects in American Museums, from Nathan Dunn to Charles Freer” (2000)

### **Week Nine**

October 20: Imperial Museums in Japan

- Aso, *Public Properties: Museums in Imperial Japan* (2013), 13–61.
- Tseng, *The Imperial Museums of Japan* (2008), 3–81.
- Pai, *Heritage Management in Korea and Japan* (2013), 71–113.

### **Week Ten**

October 27: National Museums in China

#### \*Presentations of Project Proposals

- Cheng-hua Wang, “The Qing Imperial Collection, Circa 1905–25: National Humiliation, Heritage Preservation, and Exhibition Culture” (2010).
- Denton, *Exhibiting the Past* (2014), 45–74.
- Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World: Art, Politics, and the Representation of Tibet* (2012), 177–206.

### **Week Eleven**

November 3: No Class

### **Week Twelve**

November 10: Visit to the Norton Simon Museum

- Readings TBA

**Week Thirteen**

November 17: Visit to the Pacific Asia Museum

- Readings TBA

**Week Fourteen**

November 24: In-class Presentations

**Week Fifteen**

December 1: In-class Presentations

**Final Written Reports Due on December 12 (Fri.)**

Select Bibliography

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