

European Association for Asian Art and Archaeology

Online Panel no. 5

Modern and Contemporary Art in Asia
//
Investigations into Architecture and Iconography
of Central Asia

(Tuesday, 2 November 2021; 13:00)

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Date: Tuesday, 2 November 2021

Time: 13:00 - 16:15 (CET time, UTC+1)

Chair: Andrei V. Varenov

- 13:00 - 13:15 **Julia ALTING:** Shilpa Gupta and *400 jaar VOC*: connecting past and present through different 'posts'
- 13:15 - 13:30 **Roberto FIGLIULO:** Return Home: Photographic Report of a Journey
- 13:30 - 13:45 **Annette LOESEKE:** Practices of Collecting and Interpreting 'Chinese' Art: Ai Weiwei's "Teahouse" in Berlin's Museum of Asian Art
- 13:45 - 14:40 **Maximilian Leopold LANGEFELD:** Cut, Copy and Paste: Strategies of Appropriation in Yu Youhan's 余友涵 (b. 1943) Political Pop Works, 1990 - 2000
- 14:00 - 14:30 *DISCUSSION*
- 14:30 - 14:45 *BREAK***
- 14:45 - 15:00 **Cecilia Florence CONTE:** Animal-human relationships in the Mongolian Altai: a view from the petroglyph complex Tsagaan Salaa/Baga Oigor
- 15:00 – 15:15 **Astrid KLEIN:** Riders without horses: how does the clothing of the Buddhist donors of Kucha relate to horse riding?
- 15:15 - 15:30 **Andrei V. VARENOV:** "Stag stone style" petroglyphs and the problem of their semantics in the rock art of Central Asia and China
- 15:30 – 15:45 **Katalin TOLNAI, András HARMATH, and Zsolt SZILÁGYI:** Khitan-period fortified settlements in Mongolia: A comparative study
- 15:45 - 16:15 *DISCUSSION*

ABSTRACTS

(in alphabetical order)

SHILPA GUPTA AND 400 JAAR VOC: CONNECTING PAST AND PRESENT THROUGH DIFFERENT 'POSTS'

Julia ALTING

University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands

In 2002 artist Shilpa Gupta (Mumbai, b. 1976) was asked to participate in Upstream, in the context of the Dutch nation-wide celebration of the 400th anniversary of the establishment of the VOC. Upstream invited artists from 'former VOC countries' and answered to a call for perspectives from formerly colonized nation-states. Gupta used the art budget to buy 45 tricycles with text on the seats for disabled residents of Mumbai: one of these tricycles was displayed in the courtyard of the Maritime museum. Simultaneously, the museum hosted an anniversary exhibition *De Kleurrijke Wereld* which emphasized the VOC's continued influence in the Netherlands through displaying everyday products. Gupta also proposed a series of texts to be displayed on the museums' outer walls, which was rejected. This paper investigates the interaction between Gupta's art and the exhibition, where I situate both acts of display in the discourse of the celebration. I use Michel Foucault's concept of power-knowledge, Edward Said's notion of a cultural archive and Gloria Wekker's analysis of a paradoxical Dutch self-image. Stuart Hall's reflections on the tension between the two dimensions of 'post' in 'post-colonial' illuminate how Gupta's art proposal and the Maritime museum's exhibition are not 'post-colonial' in the same way. *De Kleurrijke Wereld* presents a chronological 'post' and thus a linear relation between past and present, while Gupta's art displays a chronological and epistemic 'post' in which colonial continuity is critically assessed.

Julia Alting is a PhD Candidate at ICOG, University of Groningen (Faculty of Arts, Department of History of Art, Architecture and Landscape). Provisional title of her thesis 'Historical Time and Chronology in Art History: Reviving A Nonlinear Approach'. She is an art historian, researching modern and contemporary art practices from a perspective rooted in critical cultural analysis. Her PhD research project assesses a nonlinear approach to art historical time. The question of the authority of linear chronology has only recently been taken up again by art historians, yet she argues that more conceptual research is necessary to address what understanding art historical time as nonlinear could mean, and how it could be put in practice.

ANIMAL-HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN THE MONGOLIAN ALTAI: A VIEW FROM THE PETROGLYPH COMPLEX TSAGAAN SALAA/BAGA OIGOR

Cecilia Florence CONTE

Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany

Although petroglyphic research in Inner Asia has been extensive, zoomorphic motifs remain understudied. This study asks how the site Tsagaan Salaa/Baga Oigor can inform us about human-animal relations in the Mongolian Altai during the Bronze Age. Rather than focussing on wild-domesticated dichotomies or specific animals, I will investigate petroglyphic panels depicting the shared sociality of cervids, bovids, horses, and humans. Animal-human relations are defined as “crossspecies interaction and social engagement” (Fijn 2011:35), and both human and non-human animals are regarded as agents within the petroglyph panels and the landscape. TS/BO is located in Bayan Ölgyi *aimag*, western Mongolia, in the Altai Mountains, and spans from the Paleolithic to the ethnographic period. This study focuses on the Bronze Age, in the context of emerging mobile pastoralism. I have selected, re-categorised and quantified panels which represent animals and humans together, or animals and material culture, based on a photographic archive (<https://mongolianaltai.uoregon.edu/index.php>). New compositions which emerge in the Bronze Age document animal-human relations such as riding and caravanning, and their co-existence with hunting. My interpretational approach is informed by animism and posits that within animated landscapes, humans, animals and other-than-human persons can equally influence the production and location of petroglyphs. As the spatial relations within the panels and the wider landscape demonstrate, ‘pragmatic’ decisions, such as settling near water and pastures, and sacred actions, such as honouring the spirits who dwell in the landscape, are intertwined.

Cecilia Florence Conte's interest in Central Asia was sparked by participating in a petroglyph survey near Almaty, Kazakhstan, during her undergraduate studies at University College London (2015-2018). During her master's at Oxford (2018-2019), she focussed on Eurasian archaeology and archaeological theory. She researched the petroglyph complex Tsagaan Salaa/Baga Oigor (western Mongolia) with regard to animal-human relations in pastoral and animist contexts. She is currently studying Central Asian studies at Humboldt Universität, where she is learning Mongolian and Russian, and teaching an interdisciplinary course on the archaeology and anthropology of Inner Asia.

RETURN HOME: PHOTOGRAPHIC REPORT OF A JOURNEY

Roberto FIGLIULO

*Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain
Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona, Spain*

Since the beginning of the new millennium a small group of photographers in China decided to take a journey in the reverse direction, to return from the Chinese big cities or from abroad and travel back to the places of their origin. Even though each of them developed their works with a personal approach and depicted particular scenes, they all focused on the same direction of their path: returning home. We do not want to suggest a new pattern and neither introduce a new tendency in contemporary photography in China. But we want to show how these photographic works shared common intentions and feelings in a period of irrefutable changes.

We refer to photographers such as Zeng Han 曾翰, You Li 游莉, Su Jiehao 苏杰浩, Mu Ge 木格, Zhu Lanqing 朱岚清, Yang Wenjie 楊文潔, Wei Bi 魏璧, Zhang Wenxin 张文心, Zhen Shi 石真, Shi Yangkun 史阳琨 and Zhang Xiao 张晓. Photographers with different origin and different age, who seem to have decided to undertake the same path.

What were they looking for? And what did they really find in the places that they had once decided to leave? Was it a personal journey? Or can it help us understand some of the profound changes that the Chinese society has undergone in the last twenty years? By analyzing these specific photographic works we will in this paper try to answer the above questions.

Roberto Figliulo is a professor of Asian Art at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona and a professor of East Asian Studies at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. He is a member of the research group Inter-Asia. He is also an amateur photographer. His research is focused on Chinese art, with a special focus on photography practices. In the last number of *Yishu* journal it has been published the result of his recent study on the topic of return in contemporary Chinese art. A new line of his research is the presence of the traditional philosophical thought in recent photography from China.

KHITAN-PERIOD FORTIFIED SETTLEMENTS IN MONGOLIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

András HARMATH, Zsolt SZILÁGYI and Katalin TOLNAI

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The paper deals with landscape archaeological research of 10-12th century Khitan period sites in Mongolia. Although archaeological research has already been carried out on some Khitan period fortified settlements in the territory of Mongolia, their environment and contacts with the contemporary settlement network have not yet been studied in detail. Besides field survey work we collect aerial photographs with an UAV (Unmanned aerial vehicle) which helps us to understand the inner structure of the settlements in a more detailed way and let us take new steps in the understanding of the urbanization of the period. We process the collected materials using GIS which enables us to integrate the information obtained at different times through various methods (UAV, total station, GPS, photo). Our system is based on the orthophoto and 3D model derived from drone (UAV) images. Our work is carried out within the framework of the Khi-Land, *Khitan Landscapes in Mongolia 2017-2023* project. This project has a special focus on the fortified settlements in Bulgan aimag in Central Mongolia, especially on the ruins of Khar Bukh Balgas in Dashinchilen sum. The main goal of the project is the understanding of the inner structure of the settlements of the Khitan Empire and the relationships between the nomadic lifestyle and the towns of the Liao Empire, which once occupied parts of China and a large part of present day Mongolia.

András Harmath is a senior land surveyor, with 10+ years of experience. In his free time he is devoted to work on archaeological projects both in Hungary and various places in Asia. He is taking part in Khiland Project since its beginning where he is responsible for all kind of technical novelties. He is the UAV operator and leading surveyor of the project and also responsible for storing and processing of the gathered datasets.

Zsolt Szilágyi is a Historian and Orientalist and is employed as a senior research fellow at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences where he runs projects on various fields of Mongolian Studies. He is taking part in Khiland Project since its beginning where he is responsible for project management, project administration and development of research collaborations.

Katalin Tolnai has received an MA degree in medieval archaeology and in Inner Asian (Mongolian) Studies. At present she is finalizing her dissertation at the University of Vienna on GIS-based modeling of central places. She is taking part in Khiland Project since its beginning where her main responsibilities are the archaeological research planning and the methodological developments.

RIDERS WITHOUT HORSES: HOW DOES THE CLOTHING OF THE BUDDHIST DONORS OF KUCHA RELATE TO HORSE RIDING?

Astrid KLEIN

University of Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany

Studying the paintings of Tocharian donors, who have been portrayed between the 6th–7th century inside the Buddhist cave temples of Kucha (Xinjiang Uyghur A.R., P.R. China), it is remarkable that their clothing and body posture is fundamentally adjusted to horse riding. They are repeatedly shown in a stereotyped manner, nobly standing or walking in a row on tiptoe – a posture that is similar to the riding depictions of fighting or hunting scenes like represented in the Buddhist narrative paintings of Kucha, or else in the Sogdian and Sasanian art. Apart from their posture also their clothing signals their strong affiliation to horses. Men wear different types of caftan, trousers and boots together with dagger and sword. Moreover, there are women depicted in a type of flared trousers and tight-fitting boots. However, in no example the Tocharian donor is depicted on horseback or leading a horse. The locally recovered secular Tocharian documents mention post or war horses as well as the horses' role as a means of payment and equivalent for silk, which was important in the trade or tribute relation to China. Can the study of the riding clothes contribute to gain further information about the relation of the Kuchean people to horse riding? How can they be compared to materials in related Central Asian cultures?

Astrid Klein is a PhD student at Leipzig University and research associate at the Saxon Academy of Sciences. She holds a BA in Sinology (2013) and a MA in East Asian art history (2016) from the Free University of Berlin. Klein's research interests encompass Central Asian wall paintings, costume and identity, medieval textiles and pattern techniques, as well as the cultural and material exchange via the Silk Road. At the academy project Buddhist Murals of Kucha on the Northern Silk Road, Klein is currently working on her dissertation Dress Code in the Early Medieval Kucha Paintings.

CUT, COPY AND PASTE: STRATEGIES OF APPROPRIATION IN YU YOUHAN'S 余友涵 (B. 1943) POLITICAL POP WORKS, 1990 – 2000

Maximilian Leopold LANGEFELD
University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

As one of China's most prominent contemporary artists, Yu Youhan's 余友涵 (b. 1943) artworks have been displayed at numerous exhibitions across the globe. This paper focuses on his Political Pop works produced in the 1990s that have often, but insufficiently, been considered by scholars as mere juxtapositions of imagery derived from socialist China, political figures of the time and commerce. By examining the way in which different kinds of imagery were appropriated, this study aims to offer new insights on the overall understanding of Political Pop.

Based on an extensive formal analysis of three selected works and a critical engagement with primary and secondary sources, this paper argues that Yu's supposed 'copy-and-paste practice' does not indicate a lack of originality, let alone the decay of Political Pop as a style of art. Rather, this study comes to the conclusion that the various acts of appropriation examined in *Talking with Hunan Peasants* (1990/91), *Waving Mao 2* (1995), and *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Modern, So Appealing?* (2000) prove to be astute artistic strategies that reinforce the artist's originality and criticality. Among the multiplicity of ways to decipher Yu's highly complex works, his post-colonial critique, for example, is particularly pronounced in his latter work which subverts persistent patterns of Euro-American centrism. It is this technical and hermeneutic variety that challenges an overly simplistic conception of Political Pop, and on the contrary, suggests the existence of various shades of this style.

Maximilian Langefeld is a first-year DPhil student in History of Art at the University of Oxford. His current research project is concerned with corporeal aesthetics and queer subjectivity in contemporary Chinese art. Previously, he examined strategies of appropriation in 1990s political pop works. Maximilian received an MA in Contemporary Art & Art Theory (SOAS, University of London) and a BA in East Asian Studies (Heidelberg University). He is the author of several China themed articles for *DIG Into History* and held internships at Sotheby's in London and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, among others.

PRACTICES OF COLLECTING AND INTERPRETING 'CHINESE' ART: AI WEIWEI'S "TEAHOUSE" IN BERLIN'S MUSEUM OF ASIAN ART

Annette LOESEKE

New York University (NYU) Berlin, Berlin, Germany

Ai Weiwei's "Teahouse" from 2009 was given to Berlin's Museum of Asian Art as a permanent loan by private donors that had the museum's director choose between two artworks by Ai Weiwei, commissioned by Berlin- and Beijing-based Alexander Ochs Galleries. In a journal article, the director reflects on his decision-making process and the curatorial, conceptual challenges to integrate the new acquisition into the museum's presentation of 'Chinese' art. Findings from a visitor study indeed indicate that (predominantly Berlin-based) visitors only partly followed the curators' interpretation and instead built their interpretation on their own perception of the artworks. While the curators suggested to explore the cultural-historical relations among the pieces, visitors built their observation on visual appearance, interpreting the works as representing power structures: the (perceived) 'reduced', 'poor' appearance of the contemporary artwork was interpreted as symbolising today's unstable political situation in China, as opposed to the 'ornamented', 'rich' appearance of a historic throne/seat as symbol of imperial power. The paper takes the acquisition of Ai Weiwei's Teahouse as a case study to discuss the multi-layered practice of public-private collecting, curating and interpreting 'Chinese' art in a European museum, and asks to what extent contemporary collecting practices might perpetuate, rather than challenge, existing stereotypes about 'Chinese' art in Europe. By exploring the roles and perspectives of various stakeholders—such as donors, museum directors, curators and visitors—in shaping and (re-)interpreting the collection, I seek to identify blind spots in the museum's narration of 'Chinese' art and art history that primarily addresses European audiences.

Annette Loeseke is Lecturer in Museum Studies at New York University Berlin. She has also worked as External Lecturer in Visitor Studies at the Reinwardt Academy, Amsterdam University of the Arts. Some of her more recent publications include "Studying International Visitors at Shanghai Museum" (in Caroline Lang/John Reeve, *New Museum Practice in Asia*, 2018), "Experimental Exhibition Models" (in Suzanne MacLeod, Oscar Ho Hin Kay et al, *The Future of Museum and Gallery Design*, 2018) and "Challenging the Framing of 'Asia' and the Role of the KVVAK (Royal Dutch Asian Art Society): The Asian Pavilion at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam" (Conference Paper, Royal Anthropological Institute, London, 2018).

“STAG STONE STYLE” PETROGLYPHS AND THE PROBLEM OF THEIR SEMANTICS IN THE ROCK ART OF CENTRAL ASIA AND CHINA

Andrei V. VARENOV

Novosibirsk State University, Novosibirsk, Russia

Stag stones (or deer stones) are vertical steles, representing highly stylized sculptures of warriors dating to the X-VII centuries B.C. Many steles are all over covered with deer images with beak-shaped muzzles, thanks to which they gained their name. On the territory of China, “stag stone style” petroglyphs (or “stylized” deer) were discovered at Altay Mountains in Xinjiang, Yinshan Mountains and Wulanchabu Grassland in the southern part of Inner Mongolia and at Helan Mountains in Ningxia. Prof. D.G. Savinov had supposed that “stag stone style” petroglyphs are based on the idea of sacrificial deer, whose death enables the renewal and reproduction of nature and society. He considered hunters (archers), dogs (hounds) or so-called “chthonic predators” met in the rock art of Mongolia to be executors of this sacrifice. However, most of the scenes with archers and/or dogs hunting “stylized” deer don’t really belong to the “stag stones” period. Furthermore, the motif of “stylized” deer being attacked or torn apart by a chthonic predator is never met in the rock art or on stag-stones. The victims of chthonic predators’ attacks vary greatly (from a human to a fish) and are met in various contents. The author argues that all these scenes depict trials of a human soul in the Underworld. He believes that the stag stone represents the Universe and the divine ancestor of a tribe at the same time, whereby the images of deer on its surface reflect the social organization of the ancient society with a dual-exogamic clan structure.

Andrey V. Varenov was born in 1955 in Moscow. He has graduated from Novosibirsk State University in 1977. Since then for 30 years he worked as senior researcher at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of Russian Academy of Sciences. A.V. Varenov is the lecturer on Chinese, Japanese and Indian history at Novosibirsk State University. His Ph.D. thesis (1988) was about ancient Chinese bronze weapons of Shang-Yin dynasty. A.V. Varenov is the author of about 200 scientific articles on Chinese and Central Asian archaeology. He is the Executive Secretary of the Scientific Journal “Vestnik NSU” (Series: Oriental Studies).