

International Symposium:
**Orphaned Objects: Theoretical and Methodological
Approaches to the Research of East Asian Objects**



Date: 18 September 2023

Venue: Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana (Slovenia)

Submission deadline: 5 January 2023

The last decades brought the topic of researching East Asian collections in Europe and the world into the forefront of research and academia. The colonial and postcolonial frameworks of the collecting practices, the cultural and socio-political settings in which the collectors assembled their collections as well as the history of displaying East Asian objects in museums and other institutions was researched both in the political centres of those practices and on their peripheries. In a differently structured approach, the collections of objects themselves came into the focus of research, their materiality, and their “biographies”, providing a novel perspective to the historiography of collections.

In many cases these object-based research approaches also encountered specific challenges. From missing documentation, lost objects, and dispersed collections to the possible histories of thefts and confiscations, many obstacles can stand in the way of the thorough and integral reconstruction and exploration of East Asian collections and their histories. One issue is very common which by its definition goes beyond the research of collections – the occurrence of individual East Asian objects, unrelated to known collections and/or without reconstructible provenance. These “orphaned objects” – a term borrowed from similar phenomenon in art history and archaeology are a challenge of a unique kind, not only posing the question about their own unknown history and their biography, but also challenging the methodological approaches for dealing with singularity and the missing information and much more.

The symposium will focus on these research challenges. It will further discuss the theoretical and methodological approaches to the treatment and contextualization of orphaned objects within the scope of museology and various approaches to curation, the strategic approach to the analysis, preservation, management and protection of the national cultural heritage of East Asian or non-European origin, as well as good practices that correspond to the challenges of, handling, storage, restoration and exhibiting of the orphaned objects, highlighting the historical, art-historical, archaeological and anthropological aspects of examining objects without context.

We welcome papers and panels on these and similar topics:

- Individual “orphaned” objects in relation to collections and collecting practices
- “Orphaned” objects in historical frameworks
- East Asian collections and their biographies, especially missing or dispersed objects
- Collecting networks
- East Asian objects through confiscations, nationalisations, thefts, or gifts
- Theoretical and methodological approaches to orphaned objects of East Asian origin
- Good practices of handling, restoring, and exhibiting of orphaned objects

Important! For organisational convenience of the participants, the symposium will be organized on 18 September 2023, immediately following the 3rd EAAA Conference (13–17 September).

Please send your paper/panel proposals, including one paragraph CV(s) and contact information to Helena.motoh@zrs-kp.si by 5 January 2023.

Organising committee:

Helena Motoh (Science and Research Centre Koper)
Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik (University of Ljubljana)
Maja Veselič (University of Ljubljana)

