

ART SCHOOLS OF ASIA

2021-22

PARTICIPANTS



Alice Ashiwa is a Doctoral Candidate in the History Department at UCLA and a Japan Foundation Research Fellow. Her dissertation focuses on avant-garde art movements in the sociopolitical context of postwar Japan. She holds an MA in Modern and Contemporary Art History (2017) from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and works as a translator and independent curator in the United States and Japan.

Project

My project explores the development of exhibition spaces during the first three decades of postwar Japan. I view exhibitions as physical and discursive spaces of art production in sociopolitical contexts that simultaneously serve as platforms for transmitting ideas while establishing ideological delimits of their content. The focus will be on Tokyo's Sogetsu Art Center (SAC), a prominent hub of avant-garde art activities from 1958 to 1971. Housed in the same building as a prominent ikebana school, SAC featured experimental events that attracted an unusual mix of artists and patrons, including multiple generations of Japanese artists, famous American and European artists, and middle-class female ikebana students. When founded in the 1950s, SAC pioneered support and exposure for avant-garde artists. But by the mid-1960s, it was attacked by a new generation of young artists for institutionalising and commercialising art—the very processes that avant-garde art opposed. My research will trace the rise and demise of SAC in relation to sociopolitical and artistic trends. The aim is to understand the positioning of Japan's avant-garde art within transnational trends, and the implications of culture in postwar configurations of nation-states. Art Schools of Asia is an opportunity to collaboratively think about the complex and contradictory roles of institutional and educational support in the development of art practices.



Chabib Duta Hapsoro is an Indonesian independent curator and art writer. He received his MA from the Faculty of Art and Design, Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB). Currently, he is pursuing his PhD at the Department of Malay Studies, National University of Singapore. His writings have been published in *Tempo Magazine* and *ArtAsiaPacific*, among others. He is a part of the Bandung-based artist collective Omnispace.

Project

I am interested in how artists' aesthetic expressions relate to the politics of nation-states, with the case study focusing on DECENTA, a strategic group of visual artists who were a considerable presence and made significant contributions in the 1970s. Prior to establishing the group, the members trained at the Faculty of Art and Design, Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) (1947), the first modern art school in Indonesia. Apart from institutionalising abstract formalist expression, the art school also established artistic expression as apolitical. My project is to critically scrutinise the agency of DECENTA as the supporter of the national identity project by the New Order government under President Suharto's administration. The group's apolitical artistic expression manifested a particular cultural hegemony in Indonesia's New Order: depoliticisation. Thus, the works of the DECENTA Group (personal and commissions) not only represented the country's vision in institutionalising national cultural identity during the New Order but also became one of the representations of the state's politicised cultural policies. My research then looks at the pedagogical interrelation between the Faculty of Art and Design-ITB and the DECENTA Group in responding to the power of the nation-state.



Deepti Mulgund (PhD, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2019) is an art historian with a specialisation in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century South Asia, and currently visiting faculty at the Department of Visual Arts, Ashoka University, NCR, India. She was previously a postdoctoral fellow at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz (June 2019-December 2020) and a German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) doctoral fellow at Humboldt University (2015-16) in Berlin. Her earlier research and publications have focused on citizenship and the art museum in the colony. Her current book project considers the imaginaries of citizenship and equality engendered by art publics, and her ongoing research focuses on nineteenth-century drawing pedagogy, as taught in general schooling and “non-art” contexts.

Project

In the nineteenth century, a representational practice such as a drawing was transformed into a skill taught not just to the artisan and the artist, but also to the factory worker and industrial producer. My ongoing research traces drawing as it came to be taught in the colonial port city of Bombay (now Mumbai) to school-goers—the widely accepted benefits of doing so spanned industrial preparedness and advancement to moral lessons. In this schema, Bombay’s art school served as a key institution for determining the nature and scope of drawing pedagogy disseminated to varied constituencies. At Art Schools of Asia, I will focus on the question of the art school curriculum, and its dissemination beyond the institution. Art school graduates served as critical agents in the “application” of art school training within a wide range of fields and industries that emerged within the colonial city, and I hope to build a transnational perspective on their life-worlds. Read alongside the curriculum emerging from South Kensington, these life-worlds will enable me to trace an expanded visual field, centring art schools and their pedagogical processes.



Dipti Sherchan is a PhD candidate at the Department of Anthropology of the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research explores the relationship between artists, cultural institutions, and the nation-state in Nepal.

Project

My dissertation is embedded in an anthropological approach to understanding state ideologies, institutional spaces, and artistic practices. I am particularly interested in troubling the perceived divide between the “banal” bureaucratic state apparatuses and “abstract” creative practices to suggest that both worlds are co-constituted through complex entanglements. During my preliminary research in Nepal, I started looking into the institutional history of state-sponsored art institutional spaces with a specific interest in what is considered the first art school of Nepal: Juddha Kala Pathshala (Juddha Art School). While the postcolonial scholarship on the art schools in South Asia highlights how these institutional spaces and practices are entangled in imperial, colonial, and national histories, Juddha Art School presents a predicament. Established in the 1940s by Juddha Shumsher, an aristocratic Rana ruler, there are anecdotal references and pieces about the school that do not fully illuminate the history and nature of the institution. Within the Nepali art world, the school occupies an important place in rendering legible the “modern art history” of Nepal, but how does the school map onto the broader history of the state-sponsored art institutional milieu in South Asia? For this programme, I propose to engage with spaces that have been ostensibly “provincialised” in the scholarship as critical nodes in arriving at trans-regional histories of Art Schools of Asia.



Elizabeth Emrich-Rougé received her doctorate from the History of Art and Visual Studies department at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, in December 2020, and she specialises in modern and contemporary art and print culture in China. Her current research focuses on the connections between print publication-based art from the early twentieth century and politics, intermediality, and affect, along with the aesthetics of transnational leftist image-making. Her most recent publication, an article titled “The Nude Male Form in Chen Yanqiao’s Woodblock Prints and Cartoons, 1934-35,” is forthcoming in the October 2021 issue of *The Burlington Magazine*.

Project

My research project focuses on the intermedial appearance of what I call a “socialist aesthetic” in leftist woodblock printmaking, film, photography, cartoon art, and literature from the 1920s to the early 1940s in China. Embodying this “socialist aesthetic,” many modern Chinese prints and other media shared stylistic and thematic elements that served to unite their audience in a common sense of purpose, and through the use of “political emotion,” attempted to move them to action (Sabine Hake, *The Proletarian Dream*). I argue that this aesthetic cut across national boundaries, and served as a globally united language of social protest, often appearing as easily reproducible sketches, woodblock prints, and linocuts from the 1920s through the 1950s. However, aside from the importance of international periodical circulation to the propagation of this aesthetic, I have not yet addressed other underlying connections between artists working in different media and locations. Art pedagogy is a deeply understudied area in connection with Chinese woodblock printmaking from the 1930s, even though many of the movement’s most celebrated figures (e.g., Li Hua and Chen Yanqiao) were art students in academies in Shanghai and Guangzhou. Therefore, as part of my investigation, I want to address the role of art academies’ training of these students, the resulting implications for their stylistic choices in print creation, and the potential for unexplored international exchange between different parts of Asia in the formation of this socialist aesthetic.



Gemma Sharpe is a Visiting Assistant Professor at Sarah Lawrence College, New York, teaching courses in global and Asian modernisms. She completed her PhD at the Graduate Center, CUNY, in 2019. Her work examines modernism in Pakistan in the context of postwar internationalism, modern artists' vexed relationship to the state and postcolonial "nation building," with a particular focus on medium and artists working on paper.

Project

In 1975, the first annual report of the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) dedicated an entire section to the absence of printmaking from the national art scene. The medium "has been totally ignored," the report stated, because "print-making is a process" for which the necessary equipment was not available or manufactured in Pakistan. My research examines how printmaking did find a place in Pakistan during the 1980s when the department of printmaking at the National College of Arts (NCA) received its first ever intaglio press. I focus on the work of printmakers within the faculty including Naazish Atallah, Anwar Saeed, Afshar Malik, and Zahoor ul-Akhlaq, and examine their work against the backdrop of the Zia-ul-Haq dictatorship and the various internationalist entanglements of their practices and pedagogies. I am interested in the department as a site of practice and experiment but also of state and international power and its creative resistance.



Katherine Bruhn is a PhD candidate in the Department of South & Southeast Asian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research interests cluster around global modernisms and contemporary visual practice, with a focus on Southeast Asia generally and Indonesia specifically. Her dissertation looks at the work of artists associated with the Indonesian province of West Sumatra.

Project

Drawing on her dissertation provisionally titled “Constructing Minangkabau: Art World Making in Indonesia,” Bruhn will look at the history and shape of art training in and amongst artists from the Indonesian province of West Sumatra. This will include both the examination of formal institutions like INS Kayutanam (est. 1926) and more alternative approaches to pedagogy as expressed through the writings of abstract painter Nashar (1928-94). In both instances, the relationship of Minangkabau culture (adat) to the natural world (alam) emerges as central to an understanding of how the local has contributed to the development and shape of art training in Indonesia from the late-colonial era through the first decades of independence.



Kiko del Rosario is an art historian writing on the graphic form. He graduated from the University of the Philippines and completed further studies at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. He is currently an archivist at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Project

My study probes how descriptions of printing arise and sustain the practice. Straddling text and picture, printing and its idiom are used broadly and specifically in tales, schools, and shops. In first reporting how historians fissured printing into separate modes of dissemination and exhibition, printing's partition comes into view. The study proceeds to backtrack printing as it emerged within the pedagogy of the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts (UP CFA) and its precursors. It reviews printing shaped by changes in school name, programme title, and curriculum. The studio in the present UP CFA then cues a final conundrum—what constitutes a print shop? Today the studio is largely outnumbered by the shop. How does the hospitable parlance of the shop outperform the highly specialised and moot jargon of the studio? Parsing Philippine graphic art's historiography might unburden contemporary print work from previous modernist claims and prospect dissemination and exhibition's reemergence.



Minh Nguyen is a writer, editor, and curator based in New York. Currently Associate Arts Editor at Pioneer Works Art Foundation, her writing has appeared in *Art in America*, *Frieze*, *Momus*, *ArtAsiaPacific*, and other publications. She has organised exhibitions and programmes at Chicago Cultural Center, Wing Luke Museum, Gene Siskel Film Center, Northwest Film Forum, King Street Station, and SOIL Gallery. She holds an MA in Modern and Contemporary Art History from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Project

Though the latter half of the twentieth century saw a shift from the object to idea in art across the globe, the dematerialisation of art in socialist and “post-socialist” contexts reveal particular social tensions, including struggles against state power. My research is focused on the burst of experimental practices—and the revisions to art education that it necessitated—after the 1986 Đổi Mới reforms, or Vietnam’s transition to a “socialist-oriented market economy.” Examining pedagogical approaches (such as talk-based studio critiques) by independent art spaces, I analyse what ideas-based training (rather than based on styles or techniques) indicates about reassessments of skill and value. Further, this research probes the limits and potential of conceptual art as a covert form of free speech, in contexts where free speech’s recognisable forms are suppressed.



Santhosh Kumar Sakhinala is an Assistant Professor in the Department of History of Art, Kala Bhavana, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan. He holds a PhD from the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences Calcutta, and has worked on art institutions and pedagogy in twentieth-century Hyderabad.

Project

Art pedagogy and art schools have been the central focus of my research for several years, and the topic of research for my PhD thesis. I have concentrated on the first art school in Hyderabad, the Central School of Art and Crafts, established in 1940, to write an institutional and pedagogical history in the post-Independence era. The preliminary question that motivated my research into art institutions was how a person transforms into an artist. How can we understand the phenomenon of art pedagogy that transforms students into potential artists by configuring in them an aesthetic subjectivity? This philosophical and abstract question directed my inquiry into the sociological and institutional context of an art school. The philosophical questions pertaining to the formation of an artist and making art are embedded in the social, historical, and material conditions of the institutions, art pedagogy, and the dissemination of art. My research on art institutions in Hyderabad offered me an understanding of the deep structural connection between the formation of the aesthetic subjectivity of an artist and the way it locates them within a network of historical and institutional forces.



Shanshan Chen obtained her PhD in art history from the University of Hong Kong. Currently she is an assistant professor in the School of Urban Arts and Creativity at Shandong University of Arts in China. She also studied art history in the graduate programmes at Princeton University and the University of Iowa in the United States.

Project

My research project focuses on Chinese experimental art education in major art schools in Mainland China from the 2000s to the present. It addresses the critical transformation of the rise of experimental art education within the official system at Chinese art academies. In particular, the project investigates the pedagogical methodology and curriculum of the experimental art education at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, and how it influences other programmes in China. The project attempts to reflect on these questions: how and to what extent has the experimental art education affected the current Chinese art institutional system? What experiences can we learn from it, and how can we promote this marginalised art programme so that it would develop further in the Chinese contemporary art world?



Sooyoung Leam is an independent researcher and curator. She recently curated the Gwangju Biennale Foundation's May 18 Special Exhibition, *Between the Seen and the Spoken* (2021). Her research and curatorial work engages with Korean avant-garde art, performance art, and archives across East Asia. She holds a PhD in Art History from the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, and is currently a member of HKW Berlin's The Whole Life Academy.

Project

Building on my art history and curatorial research interest, I am keen to explore the competing pedagogical histories and developments in the fine art faculties at Seoul National University and Hongik University, whose rivalry played an important role in shaping the course of the nascent art world in a divided Korea. They not only produced trained artists, but influenced the way art was grouped, mobilised, exhibited, and historicised throughout the second half of the twentieth century. In thinking about art schools, however, I propose to expand the notion to include self-organised, artist-led educational platforms that emerged in opposition to academic schools alongside the higher-educational institutions. Although the dynamics between these "official" and "unofficial" art schools were central to the formation of the contemporary cultural landscape of South Korea, their contrasting frameworks, pedagogical practices, and artistic significance have rarely gained serious historical attention thus far. I believe this long-overdue discussion will help unpack the complex relationship between art education institutions and changing modes of creative production, as well as address a range of concerns, including the impact of colonial legacies and nationalist policies that transcend the national art history of South Korea.



Vera Mey is a PhD candidate in the History of Art & Archaeology at SOAS, University of London, where she is researching regional tendencies of Southeast Asian art during the Cold War eras in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Singapore, paying particular attention to intersections of racial plurality. Before this, she spent several years working as a contemporary art curator at ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT University in New Zealand, and the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore, among other venues. She is on the editorial committee of the peer-reviewed journal *SOUTHEAST OF NOW: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia* (National University of Singapore Press).

Project

When looking at the pedagogy of modern art in Cambodia, little exists beyond the narrative tied to the Royal University of Fine Arts (RUFA). This colonial art school opened in 1917, its pedagogy shaped by the French Protectorate aiming to contain Khmer aesthetics to its glorious Angkorean past, uncontaminated by modern and foreign influences. However, through encountering Buddhist pagoda murals in provincial areas, I realised an incredible legacy of painting that sits outside of this RUFA narrative. A parallel story emerges around the diffusion of artistic techniques and ideas beyond the RUFA pedagogy. By challenging where art education lies, and where it exists beyond RUFA, I will investigate the various threads of artistic knowledge-sharing within and beyond this formal pedagogy.



Vishal Khandelwal is a Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh's Department of History of Art and Architecture, specialising in modern and contemporary art, architecture, design, and visual culture with a focus on South Asia. His work has been supported by the 2020 Carter Manny Writing Award from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, a Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship (2020-21) from the University of Michigan, and stipends from the Decorative Arts Trust and the Rockefeller Archive Center. His article on the textile artist Nelly Sethna and her work's reception between India and the United States is forthcoming in *The Journal of Modern Craft*.

Project

As part of the Art Schools of Asia programme, I will begin a book manuscript based on my doctoral dissertation. The manuscript analyses art and design pedagogy and practice at the National Institute of Design in India between 1955 and 1985 through photography, textiles, architecture, sculpture, film, everyday objects, design publications, mass media representations, and elementary design exercises. Attentive to the movement of ideas, objects, and people across Europe, North America, and India, it places unlikely systems and agents such as the village, the developing economy, and the rural craftsperson at the very centre of art and design theory to explore how pedagogical exchange, intellectual property definition, poverty management, sociopolitical decolonisation, and Cold War politics dovetailed with art and design cultures in India beyond the twentieth century.



Yiqing Li is a postdoctoral fellow at Peking University. She completed her PhD in Art History at the University of California in San Diego, focusing on East Asian arts. Her dissertation, "On the Path to *Chouxiang*: The History of Twentieth-Century Chinese Abstraction," explores the historical pattern and aesthetic characteristics of modern Chinese abstract art. Her research papers have been published in *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture (MCLC)*, *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, and other journals.

Project

This research explores the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts' (ZAFA) roles in developing abstract art in Chinese society during the late 1970s and 1980s—a transitional period when China just began to reopen to the world. In the reform and opening up period, the ZAFA was the cradle of modern and postmodern art, incubating and spreading new art ideas among young artists. The relevant questions that this research seeks to explore include: How was abstract art, which had been condemned as a corrupted art of bourgeois class in Mao's regime (1949-78), legitimised in the society of post-Mao China? What roles did official art academies—particularly the ZAFA—play in the aesthetic and cultural transformations against the backdrop of Deng Xiaoping's (1904-97) reform and opening-up policies? How did the ZAFA's art education contribute to the shift of art standards from the instrumental values of politics to the intrinsic value of artistic forms, thus shaping a new understanding of art as a self-referential and self-sufficient entity? The goal of this project is to delve into the changes in the ZAFA's pedagogy and educational reform, and to contextualise the changes in both domestic sociocultural transformations and China's diplomatic relations with Euro-American countries.



Yuliya Sorokina

Based in Almaty, Kazakhstan, Yuliya Sorokina received her doctorate from the Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of Arts in 2017. In addition to serving as a senior lecturer there, she works a freelance curator, and has organised or co-organised a number of projects, including *Muzykstan: Media Generation of Contemporary Artists* for the second Central Asia Pavilion at the 52nd Venice Biennale (2007), and *Eurasian Utopia: Postscriptum* at the Suwon Ipark Museum of Art (2018-19). Her writing has appeared in *Afterall*, *Third Text*, and many other publications. She established the AsiaArt+ Public Foundation in Kazakhstan, and also the Astral Nomads website for documenting artists of Central Asia.

Project

The art academies in Almaty, Bishkek, Tashkent, and Dushanbe were formed in the decades after World War II, with faculty frequently made up of artists seeking refuge from the Stalinist regime. Given that nearly all contemporary artists in Central Asia graduated from Soviet or post-Soviet universities, I am interested in investigating how a unified Soviet education determined the careers of artists in the region, and how many have resisted any homogenising effects. Furthermore, with the rise of new nationalist identities in the post-Soviet era, I am also interested in exploring the subsequent divergences in strategies, programmes, and approaches, and how that has impacted the cultural landscapes of the countries in the region.



Zohreen Murtaza is currently a Lecturer in the Cultural Studies Department at The National College of Arts, Lahore. She completed both her BFA and MA (Hons.) Visual Art from NCA, where she majored in miniature painting and visual art. Since then, she has branched into teaching and writing extensively on art. Zohreen has taught Art History and History of South Asian Design courses at NCA. She writes for various art publications and daily newspapers.

Amina Ejaz is a doctoral student at the University of Victoria in the Department of Art History and Visual Studies, Canada, with a concentration on contemporary Pakistani art history. She has diverse research interests that revolve around postcolonial theory, decolonisation, activism, and feminism in Pakistan. Amina completed her Master's at the University of Edinburgh. She joined the National College of Arts, Lahore, as an Assistant Professor in the Cultural Studies Department in 2015, where she taught art history courses to undergraduates. In addition, she also taught South Asian visual culture to MPhil students enrolled in the Cultural Studies Programme.

Project

Zohreen Murtaza and Amina Ejaz are currently looking into the archival/colonial history of their alma mater, National College of Arts, Lahore, formerly known as the Mayo School of Art. They are interested in examining pedagogical discourse pertaining to NCA and the complexity of its struggle, particularly in the sixties, to assert a nationalist or "modern" identity as an institution. Various colonial experiments under the guise of new pedagogies had already left an indelible mark on the institution. Their joint archival research attempts to unpack the challenges of constructing an institutional ethos centred around claims to a distinct idea of modernity in a postcolonial scenario at a crucial juncture in the history of NCA.