

## Modern East Asian Art and the Question of Artistic Medium (Chicago, 28 Apr 12)

University of Chicago

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Impossible Purities: Modern East Asian Art and the Question of Artistic Medium

Workshop at the University of Chicago, Saturday, April 28, 2012

Room 157, Department of Art History, 5540 S. Greenwood Ave.

9:00 AM-12:30 PM; 5:00 PM-8:00 PM

Conceptions of medium have long shaped the presumptive fields of modern and

contemporary art, but particularly with regard to modern and contemporary art in East Asia. In many respects, the very history of this field might be configured the lines drawn between oil from ink, figuration and abstraction, and "fine" art from craft. Many of these divisions enacted as a means to work through evolving definitions of culture, nationality, ethnicity, and race throughout the 19th and 20th centuries; illustrations in point include the rise of nihonga in Meiji Japan or the use of woodblock prints in Republican China. In many instances, particular media were celebrated on the basis of their supposed capacity to authentically, or "purely" embody the sensibilities of a particular nation,

culture, or race. This was in direct odds with the artworks themselves, all of which were the result of sustained negotiations with diverse, and frequently, divergent, ways of thinking about form. Operative in these works is a palpable indeterminacy and in-betweenness that fatally undermines the notion of a "pure" medium. Contrary to certain Anglo-American discourses of modernity which privilege the issue of medium specificity, the core questions of modern art in East Asia turn on the implications of medium as a fundamentally compromised notion. In recent decades, the question of medium has been further complicated by presumed divisions between materials, that is, between artists working with materials associated with modern and contemporary art as defined by consensus opinion rooted in artistic circles based in Europe and the U.S. versus those who work with materials designated as "indigenous" or "traditional." This workshop aims to open up discussion regarding the position and impact of medium in modern and contemporary art in East Asia. Presenters will cover a wide range of case studies, including export

painting in 19th century southern China, the mixing, or "miscegenation" that arises vis-a-vis the commingling of oil and ink painting in Meiji Japan, and the engagement with materiality by ink painters working in postwar Korea.

Workshop Participants:

Jerome Silbergeld (Princeton University), "Is a White Horse a Horse? Is A Painted Pot a Pot or a Painting? The Long History of Mixed-Media, Mixed-Genre Arts in China"

Winnie Wong (Harvard University), "Lam Qua's Ingres's <Odalisque>: Non-Authorship and Pure Modes of Copying"

John Szostak (University of Hawaii), "Nihonga and the "Pigment Problem": Evolving Notions of Mineral Pigments in Modern Japanese Painting"

Bert Winther-Tamaki (University of California at Irvine), "Fluxed by Other Media: The Modern Flow of Asian Ink"

Joan Kee (University of Michigan), "Kwon Young-woo Stands His Ground: Abstract Ink Painting in Postwar Korea"

Workshop Discussant: Wu Hung (University of Chicago)

Reference:

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