Photography in Asia 1839–1939 (online, 30 Sep-2 Oct 21)

online / Academy of Performing Arts (APA), Prague & European Association for Asian Art and Archaeology, Sep 30–Oct 2, 2021
Deadline: Jun 7, 2021

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International Symposium: Photography in Asia 1839–1939

The discovery of photography played a key role in the growth of learning about remote areas, as it allowed for the capture and faithful interpretation of reality. Articles and news in periodicals and book publications of travelogues were suddenly completed with shots whose authenticity could not be disputed. Photography, one of the most important inventions of the 19th century, became an important milestone in the knowledge of new regions and their inhabitants, culture and lifestyle. Only a few years after the creation of the first daguerreotypes, the first attempts at their recreation were made in the Far East. At the same time, European and American photographers made their way there thanks to the so-called “open ports” and set up their own photographic studios, where their assistants familiarized themselves better with the technology of photography. This transfer of knowledge gave rise to a new generation of domestic photographers that was very familiar with the technological possibilities of photography and the contemporary technological methods, but also brought new inspiration into their photographic work which followed up on the domestic art tradition.

Photography and visual documentation soon became essential sources of information about Asian countries, the different nations there, and a contemporary testimony about historical events. Photography made it possible to learn about new worlds and find out more about remote regions from the comfort of one’s home. Thanks to travellers, diplomats, merchants, correspondents for European or American periodicals, sailors at commercial ships or warships, or simply just adventurers, the medium of photography gradually made its way to other places around the world, as part of memories of distant journeys or as part of the newly emerging collection fonds. Nevertheless, these activities did not only take place within the colonial powers such as England or France, but they also started to be undertaken more frequently in what were more or less peripheries, such as Central and Eastern Europe, Germany, Italy or Austria-Hungary.

The phenomenon of contemporary Asian photography, or photography in the Asian genre or with local themes was not at the centre of attention of specialized workers and curators for a very long time. Only over the past 20 years, the phenomenon was rehabilitated and studied more in depth, especially in Western Europe and America, thanks also to the commercial interests of artistic or antiquarian auctions and jumble sales. However, the region of Central and Eastern Europe has only been involved marginally with this research. That is why the organizers of this symposium have formulated several questions and study topics that could be discussed at the upcoming sym-

posium. They are, above all: How is Asian photographic documentation and reproduction currently evaluated and classified? What is the role of a mediator – curator in the organisation and creation of inventory fonds of memory institutions? What is the point of view on this transfer of knowledge resulting from the status of the volatile medium itself? What resonance does this transfer of knowledge have in Asian destinations? Are period photographs really just souvenir items without any artistic value? Who actually were the collectors of these items and for what purpose did they gather them?
We invite any interested experts, collectors or members of the general lay public to attend our international symposium and we welcome not only the aforementioned topics, but also new perspectives, impulses and observations. Together with the invited guest speakers, we will "focus" on photography in Asia!
This call for papers welcomes presentations from particular areas of interest and we welcome proposals that explore the following topics related on photography in Asia:

I Uniqueness and reproduction – visuality and transformation – facticity
II Archetypes - stereotypes - genres: variability - identity - (re) presentation from Eastern and Western perspective and its interpretation
III Photographic collections – curators, collectors, travellers and their admirers

The conference will be held in English.

Invited guests and keynote speakers:
Burglind Jungmann (Germany), Zahid R. Chaudhary (USA), Luke Gartlan (GB), Terry Bennett (GB)

Considering the pandemic situation, we expect the symposium to take place in a hybrid or online-only form on one of the web platforms. Streaming of all lectures will be provided.

Accepted submissions will be published in a peer-reviewed publication.
The symposium and the publication of a collective monograph are supported from the Project Competition grant of the APA in Prague.

Paper proposals:
An abstract of up to 250 words for 20-minute talks and a short CV (c. 150 words), title, affiliation and contact information (address, telephone number, e-mail) should be sent to: asiaphoto21@gmail.com

Deadline for submissions: 7 June, 2021
Notification of acceptance: 20 June, 2021
Deadline for registration: 24 September, 2021

Conference costs: free

Organization
Filip Suchomel, Prague
Eliška Dušková (collaboration/infodesk)

Reference:

CFP: Photography in Asia 1839–1939 (online, 30 Sep-2 Oct 21). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 8, 2021 (accessed Nov

3, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/33780>.