

Afro-Eurasian Origins of Print (Williamstown/ Seoul, 1 Sep 24–1 Jul 25)

Williamstown, MA and Seoul, Korea, Sep 1, 2024–Jul 1, 2025

Deadline: Mar 15, 2024

Caroline Fowler

Afro-Eurasian Origins of Print: A Traveling Seminar.

The Research and Academic Program of the Clark Art Institute is sponsoring a traveling seminar on the global origins and transmission of print. The project has the ambitious goal of re-thinking the history of pre-modern print, offering a more unified and inclusive history of the transformative technology. While often Johannes Gutenberg is heralded as the inventor of printing with movable type in Mainz, Germany in the mid 1450s, printing had been practiced in Asia (movable type and woodblock) and North Africa (woodblock) for centuries prior. Indeed, this seminar maintains that early printing in Europe should be narrated as a late stage in an inter-connected, inter-continental, inter-faith course of development rather than as an exceptional moment of discovery driven by Christian European practitioners. This seminar will work to redress the dominant western narrative of print as a European invention and proffer in its place an inclusive Afro-Eurasian account of reproductive technologies. The investigation will encompass innovations in printing text and images from before 1500 across three continents, focusing on the use of mechanical reproduction to produce multiples impressions. We are bringing together a group of specialists of Asian, Islamic, and late-medieval European print to look closely at works on paper at institutions in the United States, Asia, and Europe. We will address critical issues around Eurocentric narratives in the history and curatorial strategies of print, creating cross-disciplinary dialogue around concepts of knowledge production, repetition, reproduction, transmission, and imprint. The seminar will benefit the participants by both expanding their familiarity, vocabulary, and understanding of print beyond their field of specialization while also offering an intellectual groundwork by which to consider re-narrating dominant histories of print, especially the prevailing European account, to include Afro-Eurasian traditions. Whereas often histories of print are siloed into geographic and chronological specialties, this series of seminars will offer participants the opportunity to work in conversation across place and time to create a more complex history of print.

Program Structure:

The traveling seminar will first convene September 18-21, 2024 in Williamstown, MA and New Haven, CT to explore collections and begin establishing material and conceptual arenas of exploration. Visits to collections at the Clark Art Institute, Williams College, and Yale University will enable to group to examine examples of early European and Asian print technology. In May 2025, the Working Group will travel to South Korea for a week to visit collections, and final dates will be determined based on participants' availability for future travel to Munich and Mainz, Germany.

How to Apply:

This program is open to all scholars across rank and specialization, from pre-doctoral scholars to tenured professors and senior curators. We will bring together a group of people across geographic specializations and career stage. Ideally, however, the candidates should be scholars of print with a focus on (or knowledge of) print materials pre-1550.

To apply, please submit the following to Susan Dackerman and Caroline Fowler at cfowler@clarkart.edu:

- Two-page statement of interest, including a description of relevant research previously undertaken and proposed research to explore within the travelling seminars
- A current C.V.
- A notice of availability to travel to New England in September 2024 and to Korea in May 2025

Please submit all material by March 15, 2024

Reference:

ANN: Afro-Eurasian Origins of Print (Williamstown/ Seoul, 1 Sep 24-1 Jul 25). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 11, 2024 (accessed Sep 17, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/41175>>.