

Representations of East Asian Migrants & Settlers (Bozeman, 26–28 Sep 24)

Hager Auditorium, Museum of the Rockies, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT,
Sep 26–28, 2024

Todd Larkin

Representations of East Asian Migrants and Settlers in the Western United States ca. 1850-1929.

This conference provides scholars from universities, museums, libraries, and archives an opportunity to exchange research on the ways Asian American and Euro-American artists represented Asian migrants and settlers in art between the Gold Rush and the Great Depression. Over the last thirty years, historians have probed Asian American migrants' experiences of work, settlement, and discrimination in the mining and railroad towns of the West while art historians have explored Asian American artists' production of original works rooted in transnational dialogues, aesthetic choices, and social experiences on the East and West Coasts. This conference builds on these scholarly trends by ascertaining how Asian and European artists who journeyed through or resided in the American West between 1850 and 1929 contributed to a rich array of representations of Asian sojourners and settlers in different genres—documentary, picturesque, academic, expressive, illustrative, satirical—that promoted a range of views—ethnographic, nationalistic, empathetic, propagandistic, associational, filial, ethnic, gendered. A range of papers illuminate not only how Euro-American artists imposed naturalized, stereotyped, racist, and other identities but also how Asian American artists and individuals deflected, contested, or rejected such images in the construction of their own identities.

In the first half of the conference, “Daily Life in the West,” presenters will discuss images of Asian migrants and immigrants in contexts of labor, leisure, worship, and celebration; in the second half of the conference, “Contested Claims,” presenters will discuss representations of Asians in contexts of association, discrimination, and exclusion as well as visual strategies Asian Americans employed to negotiate hostile surroundings and to construct independent identities. In the last session, contemporary Asian American artists will share how they have engaged with, referenced, or distanced the past in their art.

PART ONE: DAILY LIFE IN THE WEST

Thursday, 26 September 2024

9:30 - 10:00 am

Conference Welcome and Opening Remarks

Waded Cruzado, President of Montana State University

Dean Adams, Dean of the College of Arts & Architecture

Todd Larkin, Professor of Art History, and Hua Li, Associate Professor of Modern Languages & Cultures

10:15 am - 12:15 pm

Session 1. Labor, Part 1: In the Mines, on the Rails, in the Fields, and in the Markets.

Chairs: Todd Larkin, Professor of Art History, and Hua Li, Associate Professor of Modern Languages, Montana State University, Bozeman

Peter Wang, University of Kentucky, "Retracing and Recontextualizing Chinese Labor in the Mines, in the Woods, in the Fields, and on the Rails"

Philip F. Williams, Montana State University, "A Ghost Community: The Emergence and Eventual Disappearance of the Chinese Community in Virginia City"

Hannah Smith and Jake Rivers, Montana State University, "Remembering Early Chinese Immigrants in Montana: A Study of Artifacts in the Mai Wah Museum, Butte"

Olivia Armandroff, University of Southern California, "Photographing Explosions, Both Natural and Not: The Work of Kenichi Maehara and Tai Sing Loo"

12:30 – 2:00 pm

Lunch for conference participants at the Museum of the Rockies downstairs

2:15 – 3:45 pm

Session 2. Labor, Part 2: In the Mines, on the Rails, in the Fields, and in the Markets.

Chair: Edward Tang, Professor of American Studies, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa

Micah Chang, Montana State University, "From Dekasegi to Permanence: Japanese Sugar Beet Laborers and the Northern Plains, 1893-1924"

Xi Zhang, Scripps College, "Picturing the 'Other' in America: Nineteenth-Century Anti-Chinese Advertising and Images of Chinese Laundrymen"

Xiaoquan Raphael Zhang, American University, "Negotiating and (Re)creating Chinese American Identity: A Reinterpretation of Theodore Wore's Paintings of San Francisco Chinatown"

4:00 – 6:00 pm

Session 3. Leisure: On the Streets, at Restaurants, and in Homes.

Chair: Diana Greenwold, Lunder Curator of American Art, Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art, Washington, D.C.

Susan Eberhard, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, "Picturing the Life, Labor, Leisure, and Death of Gon Ying Louis (1868-1909)"

Ekan Hou, Yale University, "How Not to be Seen: The Photography of Mary Tape"

Maggie Greene, Montana State University, "Cherishing Material Culture from Afar: Asian Objects in the Montana State University Archives"

Xiao Ning Shi, York University, "Mei Lan-fang's Visit to the United States in 1930: North American Chinese Newspapers' Coverage"

Friday, 27 September 2024

9:30 - 11:30 am

Session 4. Worship and Celebration: At Shrines and Temples, Festivals and Funerals.

Chair: William Ma, Assistant Professor of Art History, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge

William Ma, Louisiana State University, "Transnational Things: Export Arts, Domestic Objects, and Ritual Implements from Guangzhou to Orville"

Elizabeth Fair, University of California, "The View from the Levee in the Sacramento Valley: Chinese American Temple Objects and the Production of Place"

Hua Li, Montana State University, "Key Rituals in Butte, Montana's Chinese Community, 1860-1960"

Winston Kyan, University of Utah, "Forced Incarceration, Buddhist Resistance, and the Art of Japanese Americans, 1942-1946"

PART TWO: CONTESTED CLAIMS

11:45 am – 1:45 pm

Session 5. From Periphery to Center: Minorities in Dialogue or Juxtaposition.

Chair: Emily C. Burns, Director of Charles M. Russell Center and Associate Professor of Art History, University of Oklahoma, Norman

Todd Larkin, Montana State University-Bozeman, "California Cornucopia? Deconstructing William Hahn's Hybrid Market Scene, Sansome Street, San Francisco (1872)"

Jonathan Hacker, University of Oklahoma, "Not a Chinaman's Chance: Charles Russell's Juxtapositions of Western Immigration"

Kevin Hong, Yale University, "Looking In, Looking Out: Mapping Chinese Exclusion and Imperial Expansion in a San Francisco Photographic Collage"

Amy Kahng, Stony Brook University, "(Un)stable Ground: Juxtaposing Colonial Visions of Indigenous Land and Shifting Racial Conditionality in Chiura Obata's Paintings of the American West"

2:00-5:30 pm

An opportunity for conference participants to linger at the Museum of the Rockies and learn about local history or to explore the historic buildings and parks along Main Street and have lunch

6:00-8:30 pm

Reception for conference participants at the Story Mansion

Saturday, 28 September 2024

9:30 - 11:00 am

Session 6. Integral Identities, Part 1: Asian Strategies of Self-Representation in the Old West.

Chair: Doris Sung, Assistant Professor of Asian Art, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa

Doris Sung, University of Alabama, "Research Notes on Gender and Asian-American Artists"

Pat Munday, Montana Technological University, Shihua Chen Brazill, Montana Technological University, Zhang Ke, Sun Yat-sen University, "Chinese American Markers of Modernity: Cheongsam Dresses, Liu Mansions, and Lingnan University"

Hougang (Daffy) Wang, University of Malaya, "Three Chinese Women Artists of the 20th Century: Pan Yuliang, Georgette Chen, and Liu Hung and Issues of Cultural and Gender Identity"

11:15 am – 12:15 pm

Session 7. Integral Identities, Part 2: Asian Strategies of Self-Representation in the Old West.

Chair: William Wei, Professor of History, University of Colorado, Boulder

Mark T. Johnson, Notre Dame University, "Evidence of Oppression, Evidence of Empowerment: Juxtaposing Photographs of Montana's Chinese Communities, 1892-1906"

Yang Wang, University of Colorado, "Mountains, Mesas, and Babies: Frank Muramoto's Images of the American West"

12:30 – 2:00 pm

Lunch for conference participants at the Museum of the Rockies downstairs

2:15 – 4:15 pm

Session 8. Past as Prologue: Asian American Artists Today.

Chair: Bert Winther-Tamaki, Professor of Art History and Visual Studies, University of California, Irvine

Kylie Ching, University of California, "Tomie Arai's Work on the Poston Relocation Center, Arizona"

Zhi Lin, University of Washington, "November 3 on Pacific Avenue in America"

Beth Lo, University of Montana, "Good Children, Mostly: Beth Lo's Ceramic Renditions of a Chinese-American Life"

Shen Qu, Arizona State University, "Ching Ho Cheng – not your typical Chinese son"

This conference is supported by generous grants from the Terra Foundation of American Art, the Paulson-Brown Collection of Asian Art, and the College of Arts & Architecture. Inquiries about the conference may be directed to: Todd Larkin and Hua Li, C/O Department of Art History—School of Art, 213 Haynes Hall, Montana State University, Bozeman MT 59714. Phone: (406) 994-2720 or (406) 994-6449, Email: tlarkin@montana.edu or huali@montana.edu.

Reference:

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