Subject of Portraiture in Trans-Asian Context (London, 5-7 Dec 24)

SOAS University of London, Dec 5–07, 2024
Registration deadline: Nov 22, 2024

Conan Cheong

International Conference: Making the Subject of Portraiture in a Trans-Asian Context ca. 1000-Present Day.

Portraits have commonly been understood as naturalistic likenesses of human beings, centred on the face. The work of scholars such as Jean Borgatti, Richard Brilliant (1990) and Joanna Woodall (1997) opened the field in conceptualising portraiture as a truly multi-local genre, foregrounding the relational and performative processes of portraiture. This conference addresses the performative function of portraiture in constructing subjectivities in Asian contexts, in order to reveal important cultural, social, religious, and philosophical ideas key to understanding particular societies and cultures within Asia and its diasporas.

The symposium focuses on the portraiture of Asia with two specific purposes in mind. First, to decentre studies of Asian portraiture from Eurocentric conceptions of subjecthood and thus to expand the field of portraiture studies; second, to foreground the connections, transfers and tensions articulated by portraiture within trans-Asian contexts. The focus on Asia should not be read as exclusionary, but rather as the intent to initiate a dialogue with existing research on the portraiture of other regions such as Africa and Europe. Thirty-five years after Borgatti, Brilliant and Woodall's contributions to the field of portraiture studies, the symposium 'Making the Subject of Portraiture in a Trans-Asian Context ca. 1000-Present Day' proposes to take stock of a changing field by contributing the scholarship of art, cultural and literary history in the trans-Asian context.

1. Programme:
Day One: Thursday, 5 December
(SWLT/S108 Wolfson Lecture Theatre, 1st floor, Paul Webley Wing, Senate House)

17.15
Doors Open at SWLT/S108 Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Senate House

17.30-17.45
Welcome Message by Charlotte Horlyck, Head of the School of Arts, SOAS University of London

17.45-18.00
Let's Change the Subject: Joanna Woodall, The Courtauld Institute of Art

18.00-19.30

Panel I: Portraiture and Technology (Chair: Ashley Thompson, SOAS University of London)
Margaret Hillenbrand, University of Oxford. Read Your Mind: Facial Recognition Technology and Contemporary Chinese Portraiture
Xinrui Zhang, The Courtauld Institute of Art. Maskbook: Selfhood and Portraits of Chinese Artists and Environmental Activists
Wiebke Leister, Royal College of Art and Ashley Thorpe, Royal Holloway. A Hannya Manifesto: performative photographic portraiture as contemporary demon meta-Noh play to construct feminist frameworks for interpretation

19.30
Welcome Evening Drinks

Day Two: Friday, 6 December
(S312, 3rd floor, Paul Webley Wing, Senate House)

13.15
Doors Open at S312, Paul Webley Wing, Senate House

13.30-15.15
Panel 2: Portraying Femininity (Chair: Henning von Mirbach, The Courtauld Institute of Art)
Wen-chien Cheng, Royal Ontario Museum (Online). Genre Crossing: The Fluidity of Female Portraits in Late Imperial China
Doreen Mueller, Leiden University. Becoming Ōtagaki Rengetsu: Misrepresenting a Buddhist Nun
Amanda (Xiao) Ju, University College London. From the Personal to the General: Xing Danwen's Photographic Diaries
Bahar Gürsel, Middle East Technical University (Online). Studio Portraits of Female Domestic Workers in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Java and Singapore

15.15-15.45
Coffee Break

15.45-17.30
Panel 3: The Diasporic/Displaced Subject (Chair: Marcus Gilroy-Ware, SOAS University of London)
Nicole-Ann Lobo, Princeton University. Self-Portraits of Francis Newton Souza in Bombay and London (1949-1961)
Jung Joon Lee, Rhode Island School of Design. Surface Reading: Oksun Kim's Berlin Portraits and the Aesthetics of Inscrutability
Yingbai Fu, SOAS University of London. Dressing Like a Princess: The Old-fashioned Horse-hoof Cuffs in the Portrait of Der Ling (c. 1885-1944) for American Eyes
Haely Chang, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College. A Portrait of Public Self: Reading Na Hyesŏk's Self-Portrait through Vernacular Photo Albums

17.30-18.00
Coffee Break

18.00-19.30
Panel 4: Altered Masculinities (Chair: Richard Hylton, SOAS University of London)

Giorgio Strafella, Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic. The Experimental and Intellectual Roots of Shen Jingdong's Hero and Hundred Family Names Portraits
Amanda Wangwright, University of South Carolina (Online). Seeing the Truth in Uncut Jade: Modernist Naturism, Traditional Ideals, and Timeless Truths in Portrait of Xu Langxi
Michele Matteini, New York University (Online). The Underbelly of Qing Portraiture: Flaccid Skin, Defective Bodies, and Old Age in the Qianlong Era

Day Three: Saturday, 7 December
(DLT Lecture Theatre, Ground Floor, Main Building)

9.15
Doors Open at DLT Lecture Theatre, Ground Floor, Main Building

9.30-11.00
Panel 5: Image-Text Relationships (Chair: Malcolm McNeill, SOAS University of London)
Yiyang Gao, University of Oxford (Online). Intertextual Subjectivity at the Qing Court: Portraiture in Wanguo laicho tu and Tributary Dramas Revisited
Mengxuan Sui, Tsinghua University Art Museum (Online). The Portraiture of Female Literati: A Study on Qu Bingyun (1767-1810) and Her Peers
Nicholas L. Chan, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Online). A 1979 Calendar: Portraits of Figures from the Dream of the Red Chamber

11.00-12.30
Panel 6: The Performing Subject (Chair: Natasha Morris, SOAS University of London)
Junyao He, The Courtauld Institute of Art. Emperor or Bodhisattva? The Qianlong Emperor as Bodhisattva Manjushri in the collection of the Potala Palace, Lhasa, Revisited
Conan Cheong, SOAS University of London. Memorialising Monastic Subjectivity: Photographs and Wax Figures of Buddhist Monks in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR
Ziyi Shao, SOAS University of London. The Origins and Image Translation of the Three Horizontal Paintings of Tsongkhapa's Life Stories in Fanhualou

12.30-13.30
Lunch Break (at participants' own expense)

13.30-15.00
Panel 7: Testing the Boundaries (Chair: Stephen Whiteman, The Courtauld Institute of Art)
Leslie V. Wallace, Coastal Carolina University. White General and Other Portraits of Gyrfalcons at the Court of the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1795-1796)
Natasha Morris, SOAS University of London. 'Opening the Face of Isfahan' – Portraiture in Seventeenth Century Persian Painting
Chang Tan, Penn State University. Living Matter: Portraiture in Zhuang Hui's "Nature Photography"

15.00-15.15
Closing Remarks (Conan Cheong and Mariana Zegianini)

2. Registration
Registration links are in the below event page. Please note that participants will need to register

individually for each day.
https://www.soas.ac.uk/about/event/making-subject-portraiture-trans-asian-context-1000-present-day

3. Inquiries:
Department of the History of Art and Archaeology
SOAS University of London
10 Thornhaugh St, London WC1H 0XG, UK
Conan Cheong: 656531@soas.ac.uk
Mariana Zegianini: mz15@soas.ac.uk

Reference:
CONF: Subject of Portraiture in Trans-Asian Context (London, 5-7 Dec 24). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 29, 2024 (accessed Nov 14, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/43048>.