The Journal of the Society for Asian Humanities: Objects of Contagion

Deadline: Apr 30, 2025

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Objects of Contagion: Biohazards, Toxicity, and the Politics of Hygiene on Display in Modern and Contemporary Art in Asia and Its Diasporas.

Deadline for Submission: April 30, 2025.

The idea of “strategic proximity” is a curatorial or creative technique whereby audiences are placed in close proximity to substances they might otherwise avoid, such as biological materials or contaminants, in order to generate a productive tension between welcome and threat in the gallery space. The Journal of the Society for Asian Humanities (JOSAH) now invites submissions for a special issue exploring the presence—real or perceived—of biohazards, toxicity, and disease in modern and contemporary art in Asia and its diasporas, with a focus on the politics of hygiene and biosecurity; cultural discourses that examine the entanglements of the body with race, sex, gender, and the more-than-human; colonialism and postcoloniality; and the aesthetics of the biohazard generally. We welcome contributions by scholars, critics, curators, and artists.

The Journal of the Society for Asian Humanities (JOSAH) special issue

Topics of interest

Contributors are encouraged to address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- Biohazards: Artistic engagements with viruses, bacteria, body fluids, and other vectors of contagion
- Hygiene politics: Artworks or exhibitions that respond to the imposition of sanitisation, health, and ideological controls
- Toxicity: Strategic engagements with, or representations of, chemicals, industrial or animal waste, and their material and cultural implications
- Bio-horror: Representations of disease through figures of the alien, the vampire, the zombie, the monster, vermin, etc.
- Biosecurity: Critical responses to biosecurity measures and the governance of the body; representations of public fear around purity and safety; and governance of the “human” as species
- Transhistoricity: Transhistorical perspectives that connect the past and present through colonial medical archives; tropical medicine, imperial science, and colonial spatiality

Submission Guidelines

Submissions should include:

- An abstract (200-250 words)
- Full manuscript of roughly 4,000-6,500 words
- Artists are welcome to propose non-standard forms of non-fiction writing.

All submissions should conform to JOSAH's style guide: https://josah.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/JOSAH_2021_Information-for-authors_Final.pdf .

Please send submissions and enquiries to ari.heinrich@anu.edu.au and sophie.guo@courtauld.ac.uk

Reference:

CFP: The Journal of the Society for Asian Humanities: Objects of Contagion. In: ArtHist.net, Jan 25, 2025 (accessed Nov 25, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/43787>.