

Japanese Art History in the 20th Century (Heidelberg, 3-4 Sep 26)

CATS, Heidelberg University, Germany, Sep 3–04, 2026

Deadline: Jun 15, 2026

Wei Sun

The Making of Japanese Art History in the 20th Century

September 3-4 (Th. & Fr.), 2026 | CATS, Heidelberg University, Germany

Submission Deadline: 15 June 2026

Acceptance notification by end of June 2026

More than 140 years have passed since European scholars, collectors, and institutions first articulated systematic frameworks for the study of Japanese art. Since then, “Japanese art history” has been produced across multiple sites—universities, museums, exhibitions, and publications—both within Japan and beyond. In recent decades, the “institutional turn” or *seidoro*n in Japanese art history and museum studies has critically reshaped disciplinary self-understanding both in Japanese and English scholarships. “Japan” itself has increasingly been questioned as a stable or sufficient framework for interpreting artistic production and its histories. After the institutional turn, the question is: how has “Japanese art history,” as both a subject and a discourse, been shaped, negotiated, and transcended in the twentieth century?

This symposium provides a venue to reflect on how the discipline’s epistemic frameworks, exclusions, and transnational entanglements were shaped—often outside, alongside, or prior to formal institutional consolidation.

We welcome submissions from graduate students, early career scholars, and junior museum professionals from all regions engaging in a critical self-inspection of the discursive formation of Japanese art history from the Meiji period to 1989. Contributions may address, but not limited to, the following themes;

- Historiographies of Japanese art in Europe, the Americas, Japan, and other transregional contexts
- Reproduction, originality, and authenticity as epistemic tools in writing Japanese art history
- Art education, pedagogy, and the transmission of art-historical knowledge
- Canon formation, master narratives, and their exclusions
- Early museum, exhibition, and collection practices shaping the discipline
- Transcultural actors, mediators, and networks operating beyond national frameworks

Please submit an abstract (250 words) with three keywords, and a short biography (100 words) as a single PDF file by 15 June 2026, to

ArtHist.net

makingjapanesearthhistory@gmail.com

Speakers will be notified by the end of June 2026. Please note that presentations should be held on-site in Heidelberg Center for Transcultural Studies (CATS), 20 minutes in length, and followed by a Q&A session led by an organizer.

Organizers

Fengyu Wang, Institute of East Asian Art History, Universität Heidelberg

Wei Sun, Institute of European Art History, Universität Heidelberg

Ruri Kawanami, Institute of East Asian Art History, Freie Universität Berlin

Reference:

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