

Alternative Paths in Japanese Arts (Norwich/online, 9–16 Jul 26)

Norwich / Online, Jul 9–16, 2026

Olga Isaeva, Düsseldorf

We are delighted to announce a series of upcoming events available online and in person as part of the Ishibashi Foundation Network Leader Fellowship Programme (IFNet).

Alternative Paths in Japanese Arts: Ishibashi Foundation Network Leader Fellowship Programme Workshop.

This workshop brings together five IFNet fellows and mentors who have been working independently in their respective locations worldwide to locations in Norwich and London to showcase the achievements and collaborations developed throughout the Fellowship. The programme also features guest lectures and keynote addresses from leading experts, providing opportunities for learning, discussion, and networking. The workshop is free and open to the public. While in-person places are limited, all project presentations, guest lectures, and keynote sessions will be streamed online, enabling a wider audience to engage with Japanese visual art studies.

“Militia of Freedom”: The Art Pedagogy of Kitagawa Tamiji

Thursday 09 July at 18:00 BST | Online via Zoom and in person at Norwich Castle Museum

Speaker: Bert Winther-Tamaki (University of California, Irvine)

The Japanese painter Kitagawa Tamiji (1897–1989) spent his early career in the United States and Mexico, from 1914 to 1936. He was affiliated with Mexico’s Open-Air Painting School Movement (Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre, EPAL), first as a student, then as a teacher, and finally as director of his own small school in the town of Taxco. Kitagawa was deeply affected by the lives and struggles of poor rural and Indigenous children in Mexico, and keenly aware of the presence of tourists, artists, and educators from the United States. Like many advocates of progressive education, he prized the psychology and expressive life of the child. Yet his comparative attention to the social conditions of children in Mexico, the United States, and Japan led him toward a more radical educational agenda, in which art became a means of confronting poverty, social hierarchy, and the struggle for freedom. His attempts to implement this program in postwar Japan were frustrated, but he served as an influential catalyst in the emergence of a transnational network of artists, educators, and reformers linking Mexico and Japan in ways that continue to resonate today.

In the Shadow of Empire: Art in Occupied Japan

Thursday 16 July at 18:00 BST | Online via Zoom and in person at Khalili Lecture Theatre (KLT) at SOAS, London

Speaker: Alicia Volk (University of Maryland)

This talk unearths an immensely creative yet almost entirely overlooked body of Japanese art. Drawn from Volk's recently published *In the Shadow of Empire: Art in Occupied Japan*, and introducing charismatic but little-known paintings, prints, and sculpture made during the Allied occupation (1945-1952), it will show how the forgotten art of a country in the shadows of American, Soviet, and Japanese empire both accommodated and resisted the Cold War global realignment that followed on the heels of World War II. Volk will reveal the transnational dimensions of early post-war Japanese artistic practices and show how they hold the potential for rethinking our histories of Japanese and global postwar art alike.

Alternative Paths in Japanese Arts - Programme
Thursday 9 July (Sainsbury Institute, 64 The Close)

13:00-14:30 Mentor-Fellow Session 1: Olga Isaeva and Alicia Volk

"Unraveling the Václav Fiala Archive: The Japanese Prewar Avant-Gardes through a Transcultural Lens" Olga Isaeva, PhD candidate, University of Bonn

"Which Japanese Art, and for Whom? The Challenges and Rewards of Studying Art Historical Misfits" Alicia Volk, Professor of Art History, University of Maryland

Discussant: Eugenia Bogdanova-Kummer, Professor of Japanese Arts, Sainsbury Institute

15:00-16:30 Mentor-Fellow Session 2: Joanes Rocha and Radu Leca

"The Japanese Tea Room as a Space for Transcultural Understanding"

Joint presentation by Joanes Rocha, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Seikei University, and Radu Leca, Hong Kong Baptist University

Discussant: Simon Kaner, Executive Director, Sainsbury Institute

Friday 10 July (Sainsbury Centre, UEA campus)

09:30-11:00 Mentor-Fellow Session 3: Emily Clarkson and Eugenia Bogdanova-Kummer

"Takako Saitō: A View of the Artist's Archive" Emily Clarkson, PhD candidate, University of Edinburgh

"The Many Lives of Shinkichi Tajiri" Eugenia Bogdanova-Kummer, Sainsbury Institute

Discussant: Bert Winther-Tamaki, University of California, Irvine

11:30-13:00 Mentor-Fellow Session 4: Edisabel Tejeda and Simon Wright, "Japan, says who? On Japanese Institutions and Curatorial Practices"

"Japan from within Asia: regional imaginaries in post-1990 Japanese exhibitions and debates" Edisabel Tejeda, PhD candidate, National Autonomous University of Mexico

"Japan from the outside: curating Japan as institutional and personal practice" Simon Wright, Director of Programming, Japan House London

Followed by a curatorial workshop

Discussant: Alicia Volk, University of Maryland

14:30-15:30: Guest Lecture 1

"Art unbound? The recurring conundrum of lived practices, life works, and life as art" Justin Jesty, Associate Professor, University of Washington

Discussant: Simon Wright, Japan House London

Saturday 11 July (Sainsbury Institute, 64 The Close)

10:00-11:30 Mentor-Fellow session 5: Luis Matus and Bert Winther-Tamaki

"Encounters with Japan's postwar avant-garde movement in Mexico" Luis Matus, PhD candidate, National Autonomous University of Mexico

"Okazaki Kenjiro: Plasticity and Art Education", Bert Winther-Tamaki, University of California, Irvine
Discussant: Justin Jesty, University of Washington

12:00-13:00: Guest Lecture 2

"Women and Abstraction in Postwar Japanese Art: Reflections from the Anti-Action Project" Izumi Nakajima, Associate Professor, Osaka University

Discussant: Radu Leca, Hong Kong Baptist University

14:00 – 15:30: Lectures by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Fellows

"Craft Jewellery and the Redefinition of Artistic Tradition in Contemporary Japan" Clara Momoko Geber-Mérida, Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Fellow 2025-26, Sainsbury Institute

"Looking at Modern Japanese Painting Through Plant Humanities and Art History Painting" Eve Loh-Kazuhara, Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Fellow 2025-26, Sainsbury Institute

Discussant: Izumi Nakajima, Osaka University

15:30-17:00: Final Discussion and Introduction of 2026-27 IFNet Fellows

Visit the project website to learn more about this year's cohort here:

<https://dig.sainsbury-institute.org/ifnet/2026/06/30/alternative-paths-in-japanese-arts-ishibashi-foundation-network-leader-fellowship-programme-workshop/>

Reference:

ANN: Alternative Paths in Japanese Arts (Norwich/online, 9-16 Jul 26). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 5, 2026 (accessed Jul 5, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/52886>>.