

London, Asia, Art, Worlds conference: Aesthetics and Ways of Knowing

Conference, Lecture– Dorothy Price, Shigemi Inaga, Sadia Shirazi, Elena Crippa, Eva Bentcheva

17 June 2021

12:00 – 3:15 pm

This event is part of London, Asia, Art, Worlds, a multi-part programme of online events taking place in May and June 2021. It is envisioned as a murmuration, a series of interconnected papers, conversations, performances and interventions.

Zoom Webinar

The **Aesthetics and Ways of Knowing** panel acknowledges that the multiple frameworks of seeing, making, knowing, and telling fostered in different global sites pose particular problems of interpretation when viewed as intertwined. This section examines strategies of translation and incommensurability.

Chair: **Dorothy Price** (Professor of History of Art, University of Bristol and Editor of Art History journal)

12.00-12.15 Welcome & Introductions

12.15-13.00 Keynote Paper: **Shigemi Inaga** (Dean, Department of Global Studies, Faculty of Global Culture, Kyoto Seika University), 'If You're Fluent in English, Put on Japanese Kimono Abroad. But if Your English Is Awful, Better Be Dressed in Western Attire.'

13.00-13.15 Discussion and Questions

13.15-13.30 Break

13.30-13.35 Welcome back/Introductions

13.35-13.50 **Sadia Shirazi** (Writer, Curator and Art Historian), 'Zarina: A Postcolonial Grid'

13.50-14.05 **Elena Crippa** (Curator of Modern and Contemporary British Art, Tate), 'Kim Lim's Early Work: Reconfiguration and Reconciliation'

14.05-14.20 **Eva Bentcheva** (Art Historian and Curator), 'Incommensurable Abstractions: Rasheed Araeen and Prafulla Mohanti's Performances between Britain and South Asia'

14.20-14.45 Discussion & Questions

14.45-15.15 Optional breakout rooms for continued discussion

Paper Abstracts

Shigemi Inaga

'If You're Fluent in English, Put on Japanese Kimono Abroad. But if Your English Is Awful, Better Be Dressed in Western Attire.' Such was the advice Okakura Kakuzô (1863–1913) addressed to his compatriots setting sail to the West for exhibitions or public lectures. The world was basically under the rule of the British Empire. Since then, more than one hundred years have passed – what would be a new and relevant piece of advice contemporary Asian artists are recommended to follow in replacement of Okakura's old saying? My lecture will not try to give any definitive answers to this question but wish to suggest several points of reference for our reflection. The talk will be subdivided into three sections, namely, 1. Historical background, 2. Case studies of the Asiatic reactions, and 3. finally, some methodological proposals.

Sadia Shirazi

This paper examines Zarina's (1937–2020) engagement with architectural and cartographic representations of floor plans and maps in her abstract work from the early 2000s. Specifically, it considers the artist's interrogation of the aerial view, which it will argue is part of a feminist praxis of decolonization, in which Zarina reworks the aerial view, a tool of colonialism, surveillance, war, and dispossession, towards themes of memory, translation, bordering and displacement. Focusing on two works – *Home is a Foreign Place* (2002) and *Cities Blotted into the Wilderness* (Adrienne Rich after Ghalib) (2003) – the paper traces Zarina's use of the haptic as a critique of the disembodied gaze of the aerial view and her deployment of what I call a postcolonial grid, which offers us an alternative epistemology to the Euro-American modernist grid.

Although Zarina's work is often situated as mourning the loss of an originary home and language, I argue that it is an originary home and heterolinguality that the artist foregrounds. In an interesting inversion of postcolonial feminist renunciations of the enclosures of the feminine space of the zenana, Zarina privileges it – as a space of sociality, preservation and care – over representations of the boundaries of national territory, as a space of political identification and belonging in the modern postcolonial nation-state.

Elena Crippa

At least since the 1990s, Kim Lim's work has been discussed in relation to her frequent travels across Europe and Asia. More recently, she has been brought into a productive dialogue with other artists who moved to Britain from African, Caribbean and Asian countries; and her sculpture from the 1960–70s has persuasively been discussed as the expression of cosmopolitanism. This paper will take as a starting point current scholarship and aim to delve deeper into a more specific and nuanced analysis of the

lithographs and sculpture produced between 1958 and the mid-1960s, which have seldom if ever been exhibited and discussed.

It will argue that Kim Lim took as a starting point the unrooted modernism's love of raw materiality and simplified forms and structures and made manifest its condition of homelessness and displacement. Such argument will be made by analysing the work in relation to a personal history which cannot be reduced to her Singaporean and British nationalities, but which was marked by a matrix of events, by movement, displacement and different forms of colonial occupations: the British and the Japanese. Additionally, the paper will explore the way in which, through formal choices and titling, Kim Lim attempted a process of healing and reconciliation, as in the case of works such as *Samurai*, *Shogun* and *Ronin* from 1960–3.

Eva Bentcheva

Arriving to the UK in the early 1960s, the nascent artistic careers of Rasheed Araeen (b. 1935, Karachi, Pakistan) and Prafulla Mohanti (b. 1936, Nanpur, Orissa, India) were marked by critical explorations of British postwar minimalism and abstraction. Both artists developed a series of participatory performances in the 1960s and 1970s – Araeen's *Canal Events* and Mohanti's *Painting-Performances* – whereby they activated viewers and sites via abstract painting, sculpture and dance. After initially staging these works in the UK, particularly London, Araeen and Mohanti also enacted them in Karachi and Orissa.

This paper delves into the under-recognition and misunderstanding of these works in South Asia. It contrasts this with present-day interests in the relationship between contemporary art and vernacular forms – an approach which both Araeen and Mohanti had asserted as central to their UK-based practices. Drawing on art historian Monica Juneja's (2011) exploration of the term 'global' as a space riddled with local contingencies, as well as Kobena Mercer's (2006) study of abstraction's cross-fertilising capabilities, it proposes seeing Araeen and Mohanti's abstract performances as efforts of aesthetic 'translation'. Hereby, the artists articulated the parameters – and incommensurability – of contemporary art forms traversing London and South Asia between the 1960s and 1980s, before going on to critically unpack questions around the co-evolution of knowledge via political and collective actions, as well as literary and editorial means.

London, Asia, Art, Worlds is convened by:

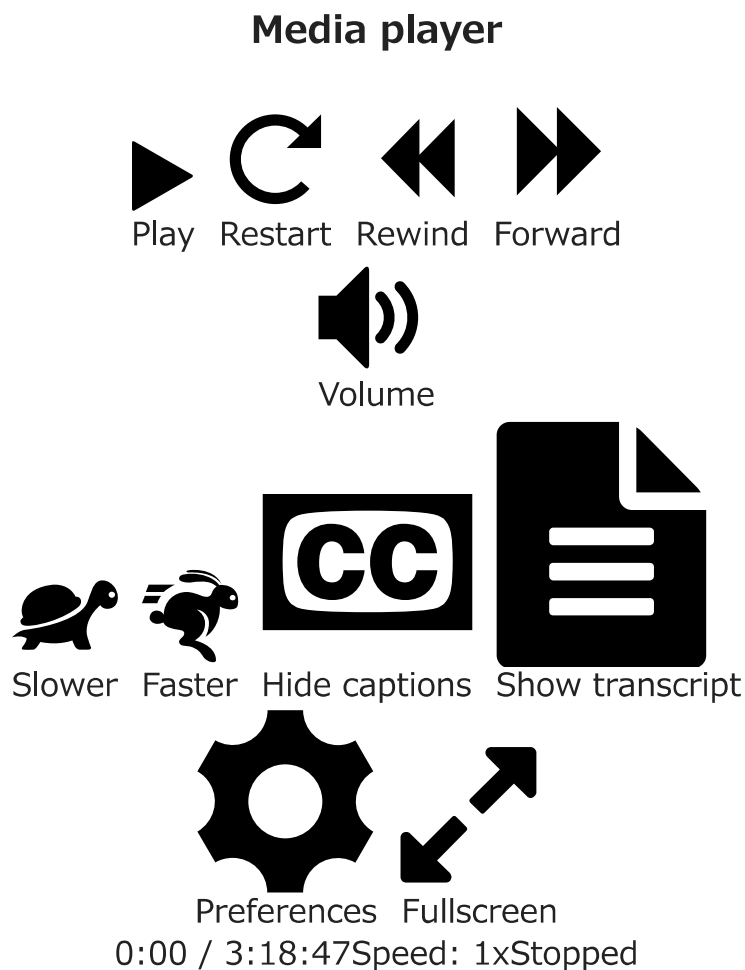
Hammad Nasar, Senior Research Fellow, Paul Mellon Centre

Ming Tiampo, Professor, Art History, and Institute for Comparative Studies in Literature, Art and Culture, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada

Sarah Victoria Turner, Deputy Director for Research, Paul Mellon Centre

Image caption: Zarina, Home from the portfolio Home Is a Foreign Place, 1999, woodcut, 20.32 x 15.24 cm. Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1371.2009.1). Digital image © Zarina; Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York

Recording



Papers by Dorothy Price, Shigemi Inaga, Sadia Shirazi, Elena Crippa, and Eva Bentcheva.

About the speakers



Dorothy Price is Professor of History of Art at the University of Bristol and Editor of *Art History* journal. She was a founding member and the inaugural Director of the Centre for Black Humanities at the University of Bristol and is widely published in the fields of Black British Art and German modernism. She is currently working with artist Sonia Boyce RA OBE on a special issue of *Art History* devoted to *Black Artists and Modernism* and with Imogen Hart (Berkeley) on a special issue entitled *British Art and the Global*. Together with British painter, Chantal Joffe she recently co-produced *Personal Feeling is the Main*

Thing, an exhibition and book about Joffe's work in dialogue with German artist Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876–1907). Current projects include a commission from Spike Island to write about sculptor Veronica Ryan for her forthcoming Freedlands Award commission and work with the Royal Academy and Kunstmuseum den Haag for a forthcoming exhibition of expressionist women.



Shigemi Inaga is Dean, Department of Global Studies, Faculty of Global Culture, Kyoto Seika University, former Professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in Kyoto, and former Dean, Graduate University of Advanced Studies (Sokendai) in Hayama. He majored in French nineteenth century art history as well as comparative literature and culture. Since his Ph.D. in Paris (L'Université Paris VII) in 1988, he has developed his field of research into cultural anthropology and intercultural ethics. His books include *In Search of Haptic Plastics* (The University of Nagoya Press, 474 pages, 2016), *Images on the Edge*, (The University of Nagoya Press, 770 pages, 2014), *The Orient of the Painting*, (The University of Nagoya Press, 480 pages, 1999), *Le Crépuscule de la peinture*, (The University of Nagoya Press, 467 pages, 1997). Among the proceedings he has edited in English are *Crossing Cultural Borders: Beyond Reciprocal Anthropology* (1999), *Traditional Japanese Arts and Crafts in the 21st Century* (2005), and *Questioning Oriental Aesthetics and Thinking* (2010). On Oriental creativity and aesthetic imagination, he has made major contributions in his co-edited volume, *Monokeiro-Mono-sophia* (2010), which accompanied an exhibition held at the Kyoto University Museum. He also curated the exhibition *Receptacle du passage* (Container of the Passage), and organized an international symposium, *Berceau du temps, Passage des ames* (Cradle of Time: Passage of Souls) at the Maison de la Culture du Japon.



Sadia Shirazi is a writer, art historian, curator and architect based in New York. She is the Instructor for Curatorial Studies at the Whitney Museum of American Art's Independent Study Program (ISP), Part Time Faculty at Cooper Union and The New School and is completing her PhD in the Department of History of Art and Visual Studies at Cornell University. Her research focuses on transregional histories of modernism and contemporary art across the United States, Europe, South Asia, and the Middle East with a particular interest in race, gender, postcoloniality and decolonization. She has published in *Artforum*, *Bidoun*, *Movement Project Research Journal* (MPRJ), *MoMA post*, *C Magazine*, and *The Funambulist* in addition to exhibition catalogues and edited volumes.

Shirazi has curated exhibitions internationally including *Soft and Wet* at Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, Project Space (New York, 2019), *Welcome to What We Took From Is the State* at the Queens Museum (New York, 2016) and *Exhibition Without Objects* at Khoj International Artists's Association and The Drawing Room Gallery (New Delhi, 2013; Lahore, 2012). Her work has been shown at the 16th Venice Architecture Biennale, Performance Space New York and the Devi Art Foundation in New Delhi. Shirazi was a Helena Rubinstein Curatorial Fellow at the Whitney Museum of American Art's Independent Study Program (ISP), an artist-in-residence at Clark House Initiative in Bombay, and Yaddo in New York. www.sadiashirazi.com



Elena Crippa is Curator of Modern and Contemporary British Art at Tate, where she contributes to the research, display, exhibition and acquisition of artworks from the twentieth and twentieth-first century, with a focus on the period 1940–80. At Tate Britain, she has curated the large-scale exhibitions *All Too Human* (2018) and *Frank Bowling* (2019); and spotlight exhibitions and displays including: *Jo Spence* (2015), *Stan Firm inna Innglan: Black Diaspora in London, 1960–70s* (2016–17), *Artists' Lives: Speaking of the Kasmin Gallery* (2016–18), and *Kim Lim: Carving and Printing* (2020–21). She is currently working on Paula Rego's retrospective exhibition, opening at Tate Britain in July 2021. She was awarded her PhD in 2013 from the London Consortium (Birkbeck, University of London), conducting her doctoral research as part of the Leverhulme-funded Tate Research project *Art School Educated* (2009–14). Publications include *Exhibition, Design, Participation: 'An Exhibit' 1957 and Related Projects*, Afterall (2016); Elena Crippa and Catherine Lampert, *London Calling*, J. Paul Getty Museum (2016); '1970s: Out of Sculpture', in *British Art Studies*, Issue 3, 2016; 'The Final Projects of Hanna Wilke and Jo Spence', in *Female Authorship and the Documentary Image*, Edinburgh University Press (2018); and 'The Artist as a Speaker-performer: The London Art School in the 1960–70s', in *London Art Worlds*, The Pennsylvania State University Press (2018).



Eva Bentcheva is an art historian and curator. She is currently an Associate Lecturer in Art History at the Centre for Transcultural Studies at Heidelberg University, and a Postdoctoral Researcher/Publications Coordinator for the international project 'Worlding Public Cultures: The Arts and Social Innovation.' She completed her PhD in Art History at SOAS, University of London. Her research and curatorial work focus on histories of conceptualism, performance art and archives in South and Southeast Asia, and their

diasporas. Her previous positions have included Postdoctoral Fellow at the Paul Mellon Centre, Adjunct Researcher at the Tate Research Centre: Asia in London, and the Goethe-Institut Fellow at Haus der Kunst in Munich where she co-curated the exhibition *Archives in Residence: Southeast Asia Performance Collection* with Annie Jael Kwan and Damian Lentini in 2019.

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