

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Transcultural Modernism: Artistic Interchange between Denmark and Japan, 1945-1970 (TraM)

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Website: <https://artsandculturalstudies.ku.dk/research/tram/>

Activities in 2024:

International conference “Rethinking Transcultural Interactions in Visual Art”

University of Copenhagen, April 15-16, 2024

The research team (Gunhild, Mette and Kristine) organized the international conference “Rethinking Transcultural Interactions in Visual Art” as one of the main activities of the TraM project.

Content

The purpose of the conference was to assemble experts in the field of global art history and transcultural studies to rethink the concept of transculturation in art as theoretical and methodological approach. For the TraM project, this would give a perspective to the research that we have already carried out in the first two years of the project. It would also help us formulate a trajectory for the remaining two years of the project, in which we bring our resources and materials into a final stage of analysis to be published in articles, an anthology and a monograph. On a general level, a transcultural approach is about permeation and entanglements, about transformation, and about challenging asymmetrical structures of knowledge production. How do these ideals play out when encountering specific cultural interactions and how can they be included in actual analysis or artistic practices? Furthermore, to rethink the notion of the transcultural is to engage in a critical evaluation of the past decade of transcultural studies and to reflect on gender, class and race that is often ignored or overlooked in broader transcultural interactions. In order to engage in these topics, we invited both scholars, curators, and artists, who represent diverse positions and approaches.

Format

Originally, we had anticipated to organize a conference in collaboration with HEART Museum of Contemporary Art Herning. However, due to various unforeseen matters we decided to postpone our collaboration with HEART to a later date and instead organize the conference at University of Copenhagen. At the same time, we opted to organize a small-scale workshop-based conference due to the good experience of the two workshops that we organized in 2023. We had found that the workshop format was rewarding because participants engage in discussions in an informal setting and with a concentrated and dedicated focus. The conference program was set up with a lot of time for discussions among participants. We organized two keynote speeches, one each day, with a discussant and time for Q&A and discussions. We organized five sessions with each two speakers, whose topic complemented each other. The presentations were followed by discussions in smaller groups. Fifty people from various geographical and cultural backgrounds signed up for the conference.



Group discussions after presentations in each session

Invited keynote speakers:

Keynote speaker Professor **Monica Juneja**, University of Heidelberg, who after her presentation engaged in conversation with Professor **Anne Ring Petersen**, University of Copenhagen.

Keynote speaker Professor **Ming Tiampo**, Carlton University, who after her presentation engaged in conversation with Associate Professor **Asato Ikeda**, Fordham University and Novo Nordisk Visiting Professor at University of Copenhagen.



Monica Juneja and Anne Ring Petersen in conversation

Invited speakers:

Alpesh Kantilal Patel, Tyler School of Art and Architecture

Michelle Eistrup, Fisk University

Kimihiko Nakamura, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg

Minna Valjakka, University of Helsinki

Kajiya Kenji, University of Tokyo

Sabine Dahl Nielsen, University of Copenhagen

Marcia Harvey Isaksson, Southnord

Tijana Mišković, freelance curator

Eugenia Bogdanova Kummer, Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures

Birgit Hopfener, Carleton University

Website for the conference: <https://artsandculturalstudies.ku.dk/research/tram/events/rethinking-transcultural-interactions-in-visual-art/>



The organizers and most of the speakers at the conference. From left: Gunhild, Alpesh, Birgit, Kenji, Kimihiko, Anne, Asato, Minna, Monica, Ming, Tijana, Marcia, Michelle, Kristine and Mette.

Preparation for international peer reviewed anthology

Following the successful conference, the research team (Gunhild, Mette, and Kristine) began preparing for the publication of an international peer-reviewed anthology with the working title *Rethinking Transcultural Interactions in Visual Art*. This volume will gather contributions from the conference speakers and participants in order to bring together the many insightful and valuable reflections on transcultural exchange. In the call, we invited contributions that deal with transcultural perspectives within modern and contemporary visual art. We would welcome papers on postcolonial and feminist art research perspectives, or with focus on migration, diasporic communities and issues of racialization. Papers can deal with mapping transcultural interaction and focus on individual artists or movements, or focus on institutions, archives, and infrastructures. We would also appreciate papers on transcultural approaches as theory and method as a means to qualify and challenge the transcultural as a concept in visual art.

We received 25 abstracts that all fit the theme of the anthology. The team grouped the proposals into five sections with tentative titles that cover relevant topics: Concepts, Communities, Histories,

Materialities, and Boundaries. The proposals include artistic contributions and curatorial reports as well as academic texts, several of which are co-authored.

We drafted a proposal for the international publishing company De Gruyter based in Germany and have established contact with Anja Weisenseel, Acquisition Editor of the Arts. The publisher has accepted our proposal. The anthology will be included in the book series entitled Contact Zones: Studies of Global Art, <https://www.degruyter.com/serial/cz-b/html>. The anthology is expected to be published in spring 2026 and will come out in print version as well as an Open Access digital version.

Exhibition *In Love and War* at Designmuseum Danmark

Asato Ikeda (Novo Nordisk Visiting Professor) and Gunhild Borggreen were invited by museum director Anne-Louise Sommer to curate an exhibition at Designmuseum Danmark based on the museum's collection of Japanese woodblock prints. We worked closely together with curator Kirsten Toftegaard and project manager Pernille Juul Schmidt.

Entitled *In Love and War: Japanese Woodblock Prints from Designmuseum Danmark's Collection* (in Danish: *I krig og kærlighed: Japanske træsnit fra Designmuseum Danmarks samling*), the exhibition focused on two main topics in the collection of woodblock prints: images of beautiful women and war prints. The exhibition was thus divided in two parts, but the overlapping theme was to demonstrate how Japanese woodblock prints from the 18th and 19th centuries were produced to create visual fantasy and imagination. One part focused on the pleasure quarters of the feudal capital of Edo, the other engaged viewers in the patriotism of the new nation Japan in war effort against China (1894-95) and Russia (1904-05). The exhibition's title evokes the proverb "All is fair in love and war", implying the unfairness of both domains, yet also suggesting that the goal justifies the means. The exhibition thus focuses on the deceptive nature and ideologically constructed aspects of the prints.

The exhibition features more than 80 woodblock prints as well as photography and news media. The works are displayed in a central space in the museum with special design made for the exhibition. The exhibition will run from April 25, 2024 to April and has attracted many visitors, as well as positive reviews in Danish media.

Website: <https://designmuseum.dk/udstilling/i-krig-kaerlighed/>



Photos from the exhibition from the museum website

Opening event of the exhibition *In Love and War*

Designmuseum Danmark, 25 April 2024

Designmuseum Danmark organized an opening event for the exhibition *In Love and War* in the Banquet Hall of the museum. The Japanese Ambassador Uyama Hideki and Museum Director Anne-Louise Sommer opened the exhibition. Asato and Gunhild gave short speeches before drinks and snacks were served for more than 100 people attending the opening.



Asato showing Ambassador Uyama the exhibition



Museum director Anne-Louise Sommer and Gunhild

Exhibition catalogue *In Love and War: Japanese woodblock prints from Designmuseum Danmark's collection*

As part of the dissemination strategy of the exhibition *In Love and War*, Asato and Gunhild wrote texts for a catalogue, which was produced and published in both a Danish and an English language version by the Designmuseum Danmark. Following an introduction to the theme and to the history of Japanese woodblock prints, Asato's chapter deals with the system of female labor in the licensed brothels of the Edo period (1603-1868), in which young women worked under a debt bondage contract in a licensed prostitution district to support their impoverished families. Gunhild's text on samurai portraits as well as war images from the Sino-Japanese war (1894-95) and Russo-Japanese war (1904-05) emphasize the way in which woodblock prints as a popular mass media contributed to construct and sustain ideals concerning warrior ethics, such as loyalty and self-sacrifice. The catalogue is available in the museum shop.



*Japanese woodblock prints from
Designmuseum Danmark's collection*

IN LOVE & WAR



Monograph *Begærets billeder: Visuel kultur i japanske træsnit* (Gunhild Borggreen)

Parallel to the curatorial work at Designmuseum Danmark, Gunhild finished her monograph *Begærets billeder: Visuel kultur i japanske træsnit* (Images of desire: Visual culture in Japanese woodblock prints). Strandberg Publishing published the book in June. Taking the point of departure from the collection of Japanese woodblock prints at Designmuseum, the book covers the cultural history of woodblock prints in Japan during the late 17th century to the early 20th century. Following an introduction to the historical and political context of printmaking, the book focus on themes such as portraits of women, erotic prints, kabuki theatre, landscapes, and aspects on transcultural exchange and global perspectives. The book includes color reproductions in large format and the text offers detailed analysis of the prints for readers to engage in visual absorption. This relates to the argument of desire being the cornerstone in the production and consumption of Japanese woodblock prints.

Website for Strandberg Publishing: <https://strandbergpublishing.dk/boger/begaerets-billeder-visuel-kultur-i-japanske-traesnit/>

Public event: Curator's Talk: In Love and War

Designmuseum Danmark, 4 May 2024

As part of the dissemination strategy for the exhibition *In Love and War*, Asato and Gunhild organized a Curator's Talk event in the Banquet Hall at the museum. Asato's presentation "Beautiful Women' in Early Modern Japan" presented an overview of woodblock print technique, the legalized prostitution, and the role of women in Japan's early modern period. Gunhild's presentation "Samurai Ideals in Modern Warfare? Prints of the Sino-Japanese war (1894-95) and the Russo-Japanese war (1904-05)" introduced the notion of *bushidō*, the way of the warrior, and how the concept was applied by artists in the visual representation of the war activities of modern Japan.

Website for the event: <https://artsandculturalstudies.ku.dk/calendar/2024/in-love-and-war-curators-talk/>

Public event: Scholar's Day: All is Fair in Love and War

Designmuseum Danmark, 25 May 2024

Asato and Gunhild organized a scholarly event entitled Scholar's Day: All is Fair in Love and War at Designmuseum Danmark connected to the exhibition *In Love and War*. Five internationally acclaimed scholars, who all do research within the theme of the exhibition, were invited to Copenhagen and give presentations on their field of expertise.

The five experts were:

- Ryoko Matsuba (University of East Anglia) spoke about how to appreciate modern reproductions of woodblock prints.
- Joshua S. Mostow (University of British Columbia) presented research on male same-sex desires as they were practiced and visualized during the Edo period.

- Mio Wakita (Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna) talked about representations of women in early Japanese photography.
- Judith Vitale (University of Zurich) focused on images produced during the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars (1894-1895; 1904-1905).
- Lulu Xinyue Yuan (University of California Irvine) discussed images of women produced in China during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945).

The event was free and open for the public. About 50 people attended the event.

Website for the event: <https://artsandculturalstudies.ku.dk/calendar/2024/scholars-day-all-is-fair-in-love-and-war/>



Organizers and speakers in front of Designmuseum Danmark. From left: Judith, Mio, Ryoko, Gunhild, Joshua, Asato, and Lulu

Ongoing research (Mette Højsgaard)

Mette's activities in 2024 (January till May) have been focused on writing two articles based on the archival research carried out in 2022 and 2023 in Denmark and France. The one article "A Transcultural Exchange of Script and Image: The Relationship between Asger Jorn and Morita Shiryū" is co-authored by Gunhild and is presently under peer review for the *Journal of Transcultural Studies*. The other tentatively entitled "In search of a Common Platform. Transcultural Interchange between Japanese and European postwar avant-gardes" is in its final stages and is meant for the project's peer reviewed anthology. Apart from that, and as part of her project employment, Mette has taught Art Criticism and Communication for undergraduate students in Art History at the Department of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen.

Art and imperial diplomacy between Japan and Scandinavia project

Gunhild hosted a visit in Denmark by curator Yorozuya Kenji from Yamaguchi Museum of Art as part of the research project Imperial Diplomacy with German and Scandinavia from the Perspective of Art History. With the purpose of identifying art objects that was exchanged between the Imperial Household in Japan and the Danish Royal House in the late 19th century, Yorozuya's stay in Denmark included visits to Rosenborg Castle, Amalienborg Museum (Kongernes Samling), and the National Museum of Denmark.



Inspecting imperial Japanese decorations at Rosenborg with Jesper Munk Andersen and Peter Kristiansen

Research stay in Japan (Gunhild Borggreen)

Tokyo University of the Arts, September 2024 - March 2025

As part of the transcultural methodology of reciprocity, Gunhild has embarked on a 6 months research stay at Tokyo University of the Arts to follow the tracks of Danish artists with links to Japanese artists and artistic environments. Her host is Professor Satō Naoki, a specialist in Western art history and the PI of the research project Imperial Diplomacy with German and Scandinavia from the Perspective of Art History. Gunhild's three main leads are related to Asger Jorn and his relation to Morita Shiryū and avantgarde calligraphy; Else Alfelt and her travels to various mountains in Japan in 1967; and Sys Thomsen and her stay in the ceramic studio of Yamamoto Genta in Hoshino village in Kyushu. Gunhild will furthermore explore connections among other Danish and Japanese artists while engaging in theoretical approaches from Japanese research environments.

Archival research

Gunhild has visited various libraries and archives to collect relevant research material in the form of articles, documents, images and exhibition catalogues. These include the library at Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art, the library at Tokyo University of the Arts, journal archive at Tokyo University, and the Tobunken Research Collection.

Meetings with specialists

During her stay, Gunhild has had the opportunity to meet and discuss research with a number of experts in the field, including calligraphy historian Yanagida Sayada, art historian Maruyama Kaori, Senior Curator at Idemitsu Museum Kasashima Tadayuki, artist Inada Sōsai, curator at Chiba City

Museum of Art Someya Miho, curator at Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art Tsunekawa Akemi, and curator at Yamaguchi Museum of Art Yorozuya Kenji.



Gunhild and Inada Sōsai at Bokujin exhibition in Kyoto

Research presentation at Tokyo University of the Arts

As part of her affiliation with Tokyo University of the Arts, Gunhild was invited to give a lecture with the title “Transcultural Interactions: Calligraphy and abstract art in Denmark and Japan” on November 12, 2024. The lecture focused on Asger Jorn and Morita Shiryū and how their shared interest in the relationship between script and image can be seen as an example of transcultural interactions. Around 50 scholars and students from Tokyo University of the Arts attended the lecture.



Poster for Gunhild's lecture



Gunhild on the podium