Beyond Boundaries
Beyond Boundaries:  
East and West Cross-Cultural Encounters

Edited by

Michelle Ying Ling Huang

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The study of East-West cross-cultural encounters has come a long way since my student days. The “bombshell” of Edward W. Said’s (1935-2003) *Orientalism* published in 1978 has not immediately reached all corners of our discipline of art history. I have to admit that I was not aware of it when I completed my Ph.D. in 1984, but then at my Ph.D.’s subsequent publication, I wished to take some position on this issue and was allowed to add only one page at the very end. Whether one likes it or not, Said’s book has changed the scene. It is true to say that socio-political investigation in art history was in itself not new at the time, but it was how Said sharpened the debate, which was so attractive to many and he presented us with an easy-to-grasp formula: Orientalism = Western domination over the East. Said himself qualifies this formula with many provisos and later moved to a more nuanced position, but nevertheless in my view this simple formula had a powerful influence over many people because of its clarity and simplicity however oversimplified it maybe. In that sense it is very similar to another famous clear and simple statement: Rudyard Kipling’s (1865-1936) “East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet”. This also is usually quoted outside its original context and became a formula.

Many scholars dismiss such formulae and insist that they have no place in a serious academic debate. However, I do find such a formula useful as an ahistorical tool, as long as we are aware of what it is. For example, Yuko Kikuchi has used this formula and applied it to Japan’s attitude to its colonies as “Oriental Orientalism”, transcending its original East/West context and applying it to East/East context in her 2004 book *Japanese Modernisation and Mingei Theory: Cultural Nationalism and Oriental Orientalism*. Partha Mitter on the other hand turns the debate around and tells the story from the other side as “Occidental Orientations” in his 1994 book, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922: Occidental Orientations*. Here Said’s formula is used as something not really to agree or oppose but to transcend and Mitter points out that both the Orientalists and their critics “neglect the individual response of the colonized to the historical situation in which they found themselves” (Mitter 1994, 7). These are cases where Said’s formula has been usefully utilised beyond its original context.

Of course Said’s *Orientalism* is not the only show in town. There have
been many fascinating and intriguing developments. Compared to my student days, we will find different methodologies, for example, examinations of not just bilateral but multilateral relationships are becoming more common. Larger regions are investigated as a unit, such as East Asia rather than just China, Japan or Korea. Gender issues are more widely examined and less powerful people or cultures are given stronger agency than before. The non-fine art genres, such as craft or photography, are entering mainstream debate. Popular culture is now been treated seriously by art historians. Too interesting a subject to leave it just to sociologists, as many of them are so visual! Not only the production of art but also its consumption and reception are often examined in detail. Not just the aesthetic merit of an artwork is analysed, but also its socio-political context, its protagonists and institutions. These and many more new developments are affecting the study of East-West encounters and you will find many such stimulating examples within this volume.

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INTRODUCTION

MICHELLE YING LING HUANG

The interaction between the East and West has historically been illuminated in world history in relation to significant events of expedition, trade, colonialism and religious transmission. For centuries, there had been occasional contacts across countries. Since the sixteenth century, the accelerated flow of people, commodities, currency and ideas from one nation to the other had contributed to the active dialogue between Asian and Western cultures. In 2004, the exhibition of Encounters: The Meetings of Asia and Europe, 1500-1800 held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London presented a wide range of historical evidence, both written and visual, which demonstrated the confrontation between Asian and Western countries in the early modern period. The accompanying catalogue investigates how, in the European mind, the West discovered Asia, and explores the human dimension of the story by looking at the face-to-face meeting of Asians and Europeans through diplomatic, religious, economic and personal encounters. This exhibition also examines the material dimension of the East-West relationship, especially the mechanism that developed in Asia for producing Western-style artworks for export (Jackson and Jaffer 2004).

Going beyond the geographical and cultural boundaries of one’s homeland, the comparative study of Western and Asian art has helped to broaden our horizon and deepened our understanding of the race, identity, culture, thought and religion of different countries. The experience and early written accounts of explorers, travellers, diplomats, merchants and artists fired the European imagination about the wondrous civilisations of Asia, yet the development of transnational relations in trade and political affairs is historically a contested process, which manifests in the unbalanced power relations between Eastern and Western countries. Anna Jackson and Amin Jaffer discern that

the goods exchanged between East and West—whether tea and cotton or maps and guns—brought about real social, economic and political changes; but the exotic could also be something that was simply enjoyable, wondrous, fashionable or amusing that lent lustre and interest to the domestic scene without beating a threat. However, by appropriating the exotic, by extracting
and consuming certain elements of it, one could claim emblematic power over the other ... Occidentalism or Orientalism could be employed to challenge authority, and could represent a counter-culture by which it was possible to question one’s own accepted norms (Ibid., 9).

Although the European attitude towards Asia was invariably coloured by their perceived position of superiority and by their preconceived assumptions about the inferior East, in some periods Westerners did not succumb to their feelings of cultural prejudice but showed marked appreciation of Asian religions, thoughts, arts and cultures. Likewise, Asians also expressed their admiration towards Western science, technology and painting techniques. The reception, possession and consumption of imported objects, resulting from either foreign trade, political affairs, religious transmission or archaeological excavations, not only shaped one’s understanding and conception of the Cultural Other, but also offered each other an opportunity to embrace alternative modes of being and behaviours and to transcend the boundaries of naive and foreign, of reality and fantasy.

In *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* (1973; rev. ed. 1989), Michael Sullivan articulates the intertwined relationships and artistic influences between the arts of China, Japan and Western Europe. He sees “the meeting of East and West not as a conflict, or even as a reconciliation, of opposites, but as a dynamic and truly life-enhancing dialectic” (Sullivan 1989, xix). He regards “the interaction between East and West as a process in which the great civilisations, while preserving their own character, will stimulate and enrich each other” (Ibid., 282). The mind and choice of the artist plays an important role in the processes of ingestion, acceptance and transformation of foreign techniques and styles, while confronting new objects and ideas. Being a creative individual, the artist may adapt, appropriate, translate or distort the imported stimuli in order to transform them into different modes of artistic expression. The hybrid form of art was not only achieved by artists, but also by other art practitioners such as collectors, curators and scholars who disseminated knowledge of global art and culture through collections, exhibitions, lectures and publications. Thus, extensive research into visual arts, culture and society is much needed to enlighten the development and effects of East-West cultural encounters from wider perspectives.

The nature of East-West cultural interaction is changing, as artefacts, artworks, cultural products, ideas and people move rapidly across the world in the present era of globalisation. During the last two decades or so, the theoretical discourses of hybridity, multiculturalism and globalisation have become topical in conferences, journals and books in the fields of arts, business and science. A number of interesting and carefully researched
publications on globalisation, global art, intercultural aesthetics and cultural encounters have come out of the interdisciplinary endeavours of departments such as political science, sociology, philosophy, anthropology and art history. Contemporary scholars employ different theoretical approaches to study the ways in which the increasing worldwide cross-fertilisation and interpenetration of different cultures change the social structures, class relations, socio-cultural identities and behaviours, the meaning of the cultural heritage, and aesthetic experiences. Without limiting their analysis to the mainstream of Western thought and aesthetics, international scholars introduced new research methods and perspectives that enable people to construct a global image of the world.

On the other hand, attention to the East-West cultural interaction is evident in recent museum projects, exhibitions and academic activities among international institutions. For instance, the extension of Asian galleries at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (2005-9), the British Museum in London (2007-9) and the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh (2007-11) shows the growing interest in Asian art and culture within the United Kingdom. The British Museum’s exhibition of Britain meets the World 1714-1830 held at the Palace Museum, Beijing (2007), the Musée Guimet’s exhibition of Paris 1730-1930: A Taste for China at the Hong Kong Museum of Art (2008), and the exhibition of Chinoiserie: Asia and Europe, 1620-1840 at the National Gallery of Victoria in Australia (2009-10), present the legacy of intercultural encounters and demonstrate the increasing collaboration between museums in different countries.

International conferences further open up critical perspectives in which political, social, cultural, human and material dimensions of cross-cultural encounters are taken into account. Such events include the Collecting East & West conference co-organised by the Florence University of the Arts and the British Institute of Florence (June 2009), the CIHA conference Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence at the University of Melbourne (January 2008), and the international workshop China Trade 1760-1860: Merchants and Artists—New Historical and Cultural Perspectives at the Macau Ricci Institute (March 2011), to name a few.

Driven by the important discourse of globalisation and my research interest in cross-cultural studies, I started to organise an international conference East & West Cross-Cultural Encounters at the School of Art

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1 For collected volumes on globalisation and cross-cultural studies in art, see, for examples, Hallam and Street 2000; Birchwood and Dimmock 2005; Schirm 2007; Feagin 2007; Braembussche, Kimmerle and Note 2009; Anderson 2009.

2 For exhibition catalogues, see The British Museum 2007; The Hong Kong Museum of Art 2008; Cains and Martin 2009.
Introduction

History, University of St Andrews in 2009. The event assembled a diverse group of international scholars from Asia, Australia, Europe and the United States to re-think, explore and evaluate East-West confrontation in visual arts and culture from the global, comparative and interdisciplinary perspectives. Chapters in *Beyond Boundaries: East & West Cross-Cultural Encounters* mainly derive from the 2009 conference at St Andrews, but also include additional papers investigating East-West cultural exchanges and interactions, spanning several countries, centuries and disciplines. This book encompasses the cutting edge research of the people involved, and advocates a multiplicity of ethnicities, specialties, as well as artistic and socio-cultural perspectives. The subjects range from archaeology, art history and photography, to conservation, sociology and cultural studies, with cross-disciplinary examples of classical, modern and contemporary periods. This volume seeks to inspire new ideas and stimulate further scholarly debate on the convergence, dissimilarities and mutual influences of the visual arts and material culture of Asia, the Middle East, Europe and the United States. The chapters are grouped chronologically and thematically into four parts:

**Early Examples of East and West Endeavours**

This volume begins with early examples of the East-West cultural clash as exemplified in selected sculptures, miniatures and woodcuts from the ancient times to the sixteenth century. SeungJung Kim’s opening chapter traces the “beginning” of cross-cultural dialogues between the East and West over 2,000 years ago. The millennium following the conquest of Alexander of Macedon (356-323 BC) in the northern borders of India in 330 BC saw a flowering of mixed cultural synthesis in the western Asiatic lands, known as the Greater Gandhara (now Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Northern India). She examines the variegated visual heritage of Alexandria on the Caucasus (now Begram in Afghanistan) which attests to early commercial exchanges between China, South-Central Asia and the Greco-Roman world. Remarkable archaeological finds, such as Buddha coins with bilingual Greek and Kharoshthi inscriptions, Indic style Athenas and Herakles, Indic ivory figurines, as well as “Apollo-Buddha” statues of the Kushan period (first century-320 AD), bespeak the complex amalgamation of cultures, traditions and conventions in the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual societies of Greater Gandhara.

Kim urges for newer assessments and understanding of the complex cultural interactions that engendered the phenomenon of Gandhara. Her in-depth analysis of “dionysiaic” representations in Kushan Buddhist art
reveals the confluence of Greco-Roman Classicism (or “Gandharan Classicism”) and Indian Buddhism. Through a comparative study of Greek and Roman material as well as the cult of Dionysos, Kim explains how an unmistakably Greco-Roman subject matter was used and adapted to an Indic religious context. She poses some thought-provoking questions of the “dionysiac” representations in the visual tradition of the Classical West, Gandhara and Kushan-Mathura. Selected examples, including the carved relief railing pillar from Kushan Mathura in the Cleveland Museum of Art, Makron’s Classical Greek vase of the mid-fifth century BC, a second-century Roman dionysiac sarcophagus in Munich Glyptothek, and other Gandharan sculptures, are analysed in order to reveal their visual echo of dionysiac characteristics and their distinctive iconographic device.

The detailed analysis of style and iconography, especially the decorative manner and dionysiac semantics, not only shows Kim’s close observation of local and foreign elements in the aforementioned artworks and artefacts, but also her careful consideration of the cultures, religions, iconographic traditions and artistic innovations of the Classical Greek, Kushan Mathura and other regions. Concerning the influence of Roman iconographic tradition on Gandharan Buddhist relief sculptures, Kim further investigates the cultic significance of Dionysos known in the Classical world and how it might bear on our Western Asiatic context. She enlightens the symbolic link between cultic and eschatological symbolisms of dionysiac representation in Roman sarcophagi and certain aspects of Buddhist thought and practice.

Anja Eisenbeiß defines the age of globalisation as a dynamic process rather than a static condition. She questions how working with a concept of cultural entanglements reaching beyond traditional, fixed borders might and in some ways already has changed our understanding of medieval art. Like Kim, Eisenbeiß also considers the religious dimension of art as well as the issues of iconographic appropriation and adaptation across cultures. She explores the history of “Global Middle Ages”, focusing on the cultural entanglements in Paris in the years around 1400. Political encounters between the Ottoman Turks, the French, the Hungarians and others fostered Parisian workshops’ knowledge of Eastern people and garments. Boosted by Ottoman military supremacy and intensive trade relations, art objects and ideas brought from the Ottoman surroundings to France and a fascination with Eastern culture gave rise to the concept of “Eastern-ness” in the artistic production of early fifteenth-century French miniatures.

Eisenbeiß investigates to what extent the preoccupation with Eastern motifs changes the visual language of French illuminators in the years around 1400 and the early fifteenth century. She argues that some Parisian workshops added a touch of Eastern-ness to the scene in Saint Augustine’s
City of God illuminated manuscript, yet the addition of Oriental clothing, textiles and objects were used to mark religious Otherness and formed part of the iconographical patterns. While Orientalised features could be added to pictures without any thorough knowledge of Eastern culture, this practice became a visual strategy to highlight the intended “reading” of the Orientalised picture. Thus, intensified preoccupations and exchanges with the East in the years around 1400 had stimulated new visual strategies and enriched the late medieval French image world with the idea of the Cultural Other.

While Eisenbeiß regards political events, such as the Battle of Nicopolis in 1396, as one factor to enhance Western knowledge of Oriental people and costumes, AnnMarie Perl also considers the political dimension of East-West dialogues by looking at the imbalance power relation between the dominant Ottoman Empire and the vastly subdominant Hungary. Her paper sketches the closest possible correspondence of Ottoman and Hungarian contemporary histories, beyond national and cultural boundaries, being the existence of a strata of artistic representations in common. The histories of common military conflicts illustrated on the page in Ottoman miniatures and Hungarian woodcuts and re-enacted in public mock battles in Istanbul and Hungary are remarkably similar. They render superficial yet insufficient stereotypical perspectives of Ottomans viewing the West as decadent and Hungarians viewing the Ottomans as barbarous.

Perl examines the expectation of patronage, miniaturists’ practice and perspective of artistic production, as well as the diverse ethnicity of artists in the Islamic and Ottoman worlds. Ottoman and Hungarian artists worked in each others’ home countries and modes, moving in the main from the periphery to the centre of the Ottoman Empire. This kind of cross-cultural transfer helps historically account for the homogeneous Ottoman artistic style and the “original” Ottoman genre of historiography, which emerge out of the diversity of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century. More than an original invention, Perl argues that these are products of a cosmopolitan attitude and reality.

Anglo-Japanese Cultural Exchanges in Museum Practice and Art Making

From the Gandharan and Kushan-Mathuran Buddhist sculptures to the early modern miniatures and woodcuts of battle scenes, a hybrid form of art was produced through early cross-cultural encounters in war and trade. Art objects moved between places not only signify local, regional, national or
foreign traits and ideas, but also serve as an agent with the power to transform societies and the practice of artistic production. In the late nineteenth century, the growing appreciation and enhanced knowledge of Asian art and culture centred on the collecting activity and conservation projects of artworks and artefacts by museums and collectors. Intense cultural exchanges between Japan and Britain led to the transmission of Japanese knowledge, ideas and objects which not only facilitated the British understanding of Japanese art but also influenced the conception and interpretation of Chinese art.

Princess Akiko of Mikasa articulates the close cultural interaction between Britain and Japan through a discussion of the reproductions of Japanese works in the collection of the British Museum and the activities of Japanese art specialists of the two nations. Copying classical works or masterpieces was a fundamental element of art training and a solution to preserve early original works in both Eastern and Western traditions. While the collecting of reproductions reached its peak of popularity in Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century, plaster casts of Classical and Renaissance sculptures as well as reproductions of prints and drawings acquired by British museums were useful visual references for students to learn about the methods and styles of masterpieces.

Princess Akiko emphasises that the Westerner’s interest in acquiring reproductions and the Japanese aim of producing reproductions came together simultaneously during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At the time the copying projects of Japanese art and ancient relics were commissioned by both the Japanese government as well as British collectors and curators who resided in Japan for diplomatic missions, travels and cultural exchanges. The value of the art of copying and the function of reproductions of paintings and sculptures made for preservation and educational purposes are recognised. Drawing on the fine reproductions of the Kudara Kannon and the wall painting of the Golden Hall of Hōryū-ji temple 法隆寺 in the collections of the British Museum and the Tokyo National Museum, Princess Akiko argues that these replicas played a crucial role in introducing authentic Japanese art to the West, yet this role has been overlooked in current scholarship because they are not “originals”.

Michelle Huang also concerns herself with the cultural exchange between Japan and Britain and their impact on the British reception of Chinese painting at the turn of the twentieth century. Like Princess Akiko, Huang’s research relates to the collecting and study of East Asian art in late Victorian and early Edwardian Britain, especially the collectors, curators and scholars who contributed to the formation of the British Museum’s collections of Japanese and Chinese paintings. With reference to museum
records, manuscripts and early literatures, Huang investigates why and how Japanese expertise played an important role in shaping the British conception of Chinese pictorial art. As revealed in the experience of Laurence Binyon (1869-1943) and his circles of friends and colleagues at the British Museum, traditional Chinese painting was invariably viewed through Japanese and European spectacles. Such a tendency was reflected in the early acquisitions, publications, as well as curatorial and conservation projects of Oriental painting in the early twentieth century. To complement Princess Akiko’s discussion of the reproductions of Japanese Buddhist art, Huang further examines the educational value of reproductions of Japanese and Chinese art in *The Kokka* 《國華》magazine and the British Museum’s continued support for Japanese scholars to carry out copying projects for an early Chinese handscroll, *Admonitions of the Court Instructress* 《女史箴圖》.

Early collectors’ unreliable aesthetic judgement and inaccurate classification of artworks imply that there is not only an urgent need to revise the attribution of Japanese and Chinese paintings acquired in early periods, but also raise doubts of the paintings’ actual historical value and aesthetic quality. Apart from the question of authenticity, Huang discerns that the writings on Oriental art by Japanese and European scholars were major references for the study of Chinese painting and aesthetics in Britain. Nevertheless, the ethnicity, educational background, taste and perspective of the writer would have influenced his or her interpretation of the close relationship and distinctive characters of Japanese and Chinese painting. Okakura Kakuzo’s 岡倉覚三 (1862-1913) *The Ideals of the East* (1903) was an early reference shaping Binyon’s understanding of Chinese painting and thought from the perspective of a Japanese nationalist.

While the Japanese expertise and technique were handed down to the British Museum’s curators, restorers and mounters, the knowledge of Japanese ceramic making was also transmitted to British potters in the first half of the twentieth century. Based on a recent discovery of Matsubayashi Tsurunosuke’s 松林靏之助 (1894-1932) family archive, Shinya Maezaki introduces the background of the Japanese ceramicist and discusses how the Japanese expertise in ceramic making was handed down to British potters. During his short stay in St Ives, Cornwall in 1923-4, Matsubayashi lectured on the theory and manufacture of ceramics and provided practical training in ceramic making. He built a Japanese-style three-chambered climbing kiln for Bernard Howell Leach (1887-1979) and maintained a sustainable production system necessary for the survival of the Leach Pottery in its infancy. The legacy that Matsubayashi left for the Pottery was fostered by Leach and over 100 graduates, and further passed to other students both across and beyond Britain. Their creative works and activities worldwide
prove global dissemination of the art of Japanese ceramic making.

**Fabricating the Other**

While the Japanese artists, scholars and mounters helped to foster the British knowledge of Oriental painting and the making of reproductions and ceramics, European techniques and perspectives also challenged the convention of representations in Asian painting, ceramics, and photography. During the eighteenth century, *tongjing hua* 通景畫 or “penetrable-scene paintings” were jointly created by a group of European and Chinese artists, serving the Qianlong 乾隆 Emperor (r. 1736-1795) in the 1770s. The massive, colourful works pasted on walls and ceilings borrowed imported European perspectival techniques to reshape the viewer’s perception of space and reality, by integrating the nearby architecture and eliminating the supporting surface. Although these Sino-European paintings were a dramatic departure from traditional ink landscapes and abstracted brushwork, they once wallpapered the Forbidden City and other imperial residences around Beijing. They also offer new insights into the roles of European art, the Italian Jesuit lay brothers and professional painters at the Chinese court during the imperial Golden Age.

Based on original research conducted at the Forbidden City, Kristina Kleutghen recounts the biography of these deceptive illusionistic paintings in order to reveal new implications about Sino-European artistic exchanges at the late eighteenth-century Chinese court. Apart from the art training and collaboration between Chinese and European painters, the technical and conceptual foundations of *tongjing hua* are discussed. Considering the motivations behind the intentional deceptions of this mysterious and sensational genre, Kleutghen argues that the realisation of the pleasurable deception perpetrated by *tongjing hua* was the most valuable part of the viewing experience. The feeling of marvel and wonder at discovering the true nature of *tongjing hua* evoked Qianlong’s aesthetic pleasure when he (re)discovered how the European perspectival techniques could recreate the effects of real human vision and invite the viewer’s interaction. The imported techniques were put to use in an assertive and self-possessed adaptation that innovated a new kind of painting exclusive to the eighteenth-century imperial patronage.

While illusionistic paintings were used to deceive the viewer, modern ceramicists also intend to produce “fake” *Famille Noire* wares, a fashionable type of Chinese porcelain appealing to the collectors in China, Britain and America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries. In her review of early literatures and documentary evidence, Konstanze Amelie Knittler discovers several misconceptions about the dating of *Famille Noire*. Through a stylistic analysis of large scale *Famille Noire* vases in the George Salting collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Lady Lever Art Gallery in Port Sunlight near Liverpool, she finds that those objects with a black ground were not original works produced in the late Ming (1368-1644 AD) or Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1662-1722) periods, but were an “new” invention of the nineteenth century. The recent conservation project of *Famille Noire* provides additional scientific evidence for judging a more accurate dating of this type of ware produced in different periods.

Knittler questions why one would have intended to produce “fake” *Famille Noire* wares in the late nineteenth century. To cater for the taste of imperial and private collectors in China and the West, original Kangxi porcelains were re-decorated and *Famille Noire* in the style of “aesthetic” blue and white Kangxi pieces were manufactured at the time. Knittler further examines the price development of *Famille Noire* in the British and American art markets between 1870 and 1920. Her analysis shows that American buyers’ stronger purchasing power and demand for *Famille Noire* were related to Western art dealers’ marketing strategy as well as the taste and wealth of collectors.

Even in the late twentieth century, collectors and dealers played a dominant role in manipulating the art market and artistic practice. Samine Tabatabaei throws a specific light on the presence of Iranian art in the international art market that is mediated by Western expectations of the Orient. While examining the development of contemporary Iranian photography from the 1990s to the present, Tabatabaei finds that Iranian artists tend to reproduce a recognisable Orientalist image conforming to the Western stereotypical perception of the Orient and Middle Eastern art. While Iranian artists are frustrated and marginalised by local cultural authorities and restricted policies, many of them choose to exhibit their works in the West in order to gain recognition in the international art world. At the same time, contemporary Iranian artists challenge socio-cultural issues through new themes and media, and have become critical in evaluating the Iranian tradition and culture after the Iran-Iraq War (1980-8).

Addressing the issue of exoticism and the representation of Iranian national identity, Tabatabaei regards photography as a medium for fabricating the image of the Cultural Other. She explores the development of national art in Iran and the constraints of contemporary Iranian artists in relation to the dynamic socio-political environments between the 1950s and the 1980s. In the works of two prominent Tehran-based photographers,
Tabatabaei realises that contemporary Iranian photographers play with visual features of national identity and make use of ornamental motifs and symbols of the Iranian past. They fabricate the stereotypical image of the Middle East and Oriental women that is familiar with the predominant Western perception of the Orient and Oriental women in the harem. Thus, Western superiority and the ideology of colonialism are maintained.

The practice of cultural appropriation and the capacity for absorption and indigenisation of foreign cultures are also revealed in contemporary Japanese photography. Yayoi Shionoiri explores the visual testimony and representations of Mishima Yukio’s 三島由紀夫 (1925-1970) identity in the 1985 edition of Barakei 『薔薇刑』, uncovering the possible goals and reception of the collaboration between this world-renowned Japanese writer and the avant-garde Japanese photographer Hosoe Eikoh 細江英公 (b. 1933). Through the use of bodies, fiction-staging and stage-managing techniques, Hosoe juxtaposed images of Mishima’s naked muscular body against blurry images of identifiable Italian Renaissance paintings, resulting in a mythical visual presentation of portraiture and theatrical photographic performance, and creating an important testimony to Mishima’s complex persona and his representations of multi-faceted identity along the modes of both nationalism and syncretism. Hosoe undertook a process of abstraction in capturing the body, ideologies and spirit of Mishima, who performed as object-as-subject, alongside other tangible items indicative of his aesthetic sensibilities. Shionoiri argues that Mishima’s insertion into appropriated images from the Western aesthetic canon is both an act of acceptance and an embrace of the represented ideologies. Hosoe merged Mishima’s perceived aesthetic and cultural values with the Western thought represented by artistic icons, and thus, ironically, created another Mishima myth.

Cross-Cultural Encounters in Contemporary Visual Culture

In response to the influence of the Western aesthetic canon on the development of modern Asian art, how did contemporary Chinese artists make reference from European and American art in transforming their individual expression? Sarah Ng examines the transitions and negotiation of tradition between the East and West as expressed in contemporary Chinese calligraphy. Since the second century of the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 AD), Chinese calligraphy has already been regarded as an artistic expression with a great influence on other art forms like painting. Ng discusses some key concepts that define and evaluate whether a piece of artwork is Chinese
calligraphy, with special reference to contemporary views and practices under the influence of a Western perspective. On the one hand, changes in the political system and environment in modern China triggered a transformation in the nature of Chinese calligraphy. On the other hand, the cultural, informational exchanges between Eastern and Western countries in the early 1980s inspired contemporary Chinese artists to create a new form of Chinese calligraphy, which no longer possesses traditional features alone but also includes Western artistic elements. Such a transformation, either intentional or natural, successfully integrated Western ideas into Chinese calligraphy.

Ng argues that Xu Bing’s (b. 1955) pseudo-language calligraphic work pushes the boundaries of Chinese art, as he transforms both conventional and contemporary Western vocabulary into calligraphy. In particular, Xu Bing uses texts from non-traditional sources, including slang, to challenge both the tradition and semantic functions of calligraphy, but at the same time, his work maintains the historical and cultural contexts of Chinese calligraphy. Ng’s paper provides new insights into the meaning and perception of contemporary Chinese calligraphy with explanations of its underlying cultural convergence.

Extending the East-West artistic interaction from art history to the socio-cultural sphere, the question of how Eastern and Western cultures influence and misinterpret each other, in social behaviours, entertainments and marketing strategies, is also examined in this book. Based on ethnographic observations and face-to-face interviews conducted in New York City and Taipei, Pei-Ti Wang investigates the consumption patterns of *otaku*—the transnational fans of *anime* (Japanese animation), *manga* (Japanese comic books or graphic novels) and Japanese video games—in different countries. *Anime, manga* and games which are originated from Japanese popular culture have circulated globally, yet they have been consumed and reproduced differently by *otaku* across geographical and ethnical boundaries. Considering the geographic and cultural proximity and language barriers, Wang compares the *otaku* activities, including cosplaying, making *doujinshi* and fansubbing, in New York City and Taipei.

In response to the development of digital technologies, as well as the conceptual framework of “affective/free labour” and “database consumption” established by contemporary cultural critics, Wang argues that transnational *otaku* consumption illustrates a change in capitalist consumer-producer identities, blurring boundaries between them. She relates the concept of *moe*—a kind of affective response towards certain character traits in *anime, manga* and games; or in Wang’s definition, the becoming-conscious expression of affect—to the bodies and affects in the *otaku* culture, in order
to uncover the changing relationship and interaction between bodies, affects and technologies.

While *otaku* in the United States and Taiwan take advantage of digital technologies to remix and reproduce cultural products from the Japanese *anime* industry, publishers in the West also adopt the strategy of cross-cultural appropriation in promoting literatures from the Middle East and Asia. Duygu Tekgül explores Western encounters with the cultures of the Middle East and Asia in the British book trade, focusing on the visual elements of covers designed for translated novels. She gives an outline of marketing practices in the British book industry today and discusses exoticising strategies adopted by publishers. Through a semiological analysis of several front covers of novels translated from Chinese, Japanese, Bengali, Arabic and Turkish, Tekgül discovers that book publishers, in their packaging strategies, show a tendency to exoticise books translated from the languages of the Middle East, as well as East and South Asia.

Like Tabatabaei, Tekgül also refers to postcolonial theory, such as Homi Bhabha’s discussion of Otherness and Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism, in investigating the Western conception of the East and the mode of representation of Otherness in cultural products like book covers. Tekgül further draws on literary theory, mainly Pascale Casanova’s theory on international literary space and Itamar Even-Zohar’s polysystem theory, and demonstrates that the use of exoticism in marketing translated fiction through iconic imagery seems to indicate Orientalist representations. Nevertheless, emphasising the element of “foreignness” in book promotion might contribute to the stereotypical representation of Eastern cultures in the social imagination of the West. The representation of foreign literature as exotica not only leads to a preconditioned reading of the exotic Other, but might also create and reinforce a preconception that translated fiction should be read not for its literary quality, but for its exotic nature.

The collaborative effort of this collection is one step in the process of enriching knowledge and experience of cross-cultural encounters in our increasingly globalised world. By developing distinctive approaches to the cross-cultural dynamics, authors explore the cross-border interconnectedness of the world in many different contexts, and provide layered accounts of the East-West interaction in art and visual culture with complex arguments. They provide a detailed historical investigation and critical assessments of aesthetic adjustments, artistic and curatorial practices, as well as socio-political and cultural phenomena across time. They also reflect on the theoretical discourses of Orientalism, post-colonialism and globalisation. I hope that the reader will enjoy the scope, variety and profundity of the different contributions to the four parts of this book, and continue further
debate on the subject with new voices.

Works Cited


PART I

EARLY EXAMPLES OF EAST AND WEST ENDEAVOURS
In 330 BC, Alexander of Macedon (356-323 BC), popularly known as Alexander the Great, defeated the last of the Achaemenid kings, Darius III (380-330 BC), and thereafter set out to conquer the previous landholdings of the vast Persian Empire. Alexander swept through present day Iran, reached the Hindu Kush, and expanded his Hellenistic Kingdom to the northern borders of India, establishing multiple colonies, or “Alexandrias”, along the way. One such city, Alexandria on the Caucasus, identified with modern day Begram in Afghanistan, has yielded one of the richest ensembles of treasures in Central Asia, attesting to intense commercial exchange on the crossroads of Eurasia. A series of excavations, spanning ten years from 1936 to 1946, led to the remarkable discovery of the so-called “Begram hoard”, famous for the variety of Indic style ivories. Hellenistic and Roman imports were also found within the same archaeological context: bronze figurines of an unmistakably Classical character, painted glassware from Roman Egypt, as well as Hellenistic plaster cast medallions (emblemata) that may be related to the circulation of motifs and copies. Chinese lacquer ware features in this hoard as well, among other treasures, placing the remains of the ancient city in the context

1 I owe Prof. Vidya Dehejia for her generous guidance and Dr Christian Luczanits for his insights, and I thank Dr Michelle Huang for her editorial work and amazing patience.

2 Some scholars follow A. Foucher’s initial identification of the site as ancient Kapisi, the summer capital of the Kushans.

3 First systematic excavation done at the site dates to 1936 under the direction of J. Carl and J. Meunié, and the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan.