

AN4AA Postgraduate Symposium

The Afterlives of Asian Art



21 August 2026
9:00am-4:00pm AEST
11:00am-6:00pm NZST

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About

The Australasian Network for Asian Art (AN4AA) consists of researchers, including academics, curators, and postgraduate students, from Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand working in the field of Asian art. Our specialisations and interests span geographical and temporal registers. In addition to studies in Asian art, the Network is attentive to histories of cultural interaction among Asian cultures and between Asian and non-Asian cultures.

Our activities currently include:

- Talks and symposia related to Asian art
- Annual professional gathering held in conjunction with the AAANZ annual conference
- Annual postgraduate symposium
- Advocacy for Asian art research and resources

AN4AA is an open means for sharing research and fostering a scholarly community. It is also a vehicle for advocacy and a site for mutual critique in a supportive environment. There is no fixed membership structure, and all researchers are supported by their home institutions. Building and maintaining critical mass in this area of research is a primary goal of the Network, to which end, we seek to proactively engage with researchers and research groups across Australasia and internationally.

For more information about AN4AA: <https://www.an4aa.org/about>

Join our network: <https://www.an4aa.org/join>

AN4AA acknowledges, celebrates, and pays our respects to the Indigenous communities across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, on whose lands and waters we live, work, and gather.

Program Overview

2026 marks the ninth year since the establishment of Asian Art Research Now, the annual postgraduate symposium organised by the Australasian Network for Asian Art (AN4AA).

The 2026 symposium thematically explores *The Afterlives of Asian Art*—when artworks, objects, and creative practices persist, circulate, and acquire new meanings beyond their original contexts. By examining these afterlives, we can better understand not only what survives, but how and why it endures. This perspective highlights the influence of archives, museums, historians, and contemporary practitioners in shaping present-day understandings of Asian art. Yet, while these institutions can generate new meanings, they risk reductionist interpretations, particularly in the context of post-colonial legacies that reflect or reinforce power dynamics, privileging certain narratives while marginalising others. Thus, this symposium also invites critical inquiry into the roles and practices of these institutions.

The symposium will take place in a hybrid format, with in-person hubs in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand hosted at the Art Gallery of South Australia (Adelaide), RMIT (Melbourne), University of New South Wales (Sydney), and the University of Wellington in Aotearoa New Zealand. The day-long symposium aims to highlight and share the vitality and diversity of Asian art research undertaken by current and recent postgraduate students. It aims to foster supportive critique, feedback, and conversations across institutions and across the diverse geographies and temporalities of Asian art research.

The symposium serves as a platform for connecting with other scholars and emerging academics across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. It provides an opportunity to share research in progress among Asian art researchers from various backgrounds, including Master's (coursework or research) students and doctoral candidates in disciplines such as art history, creative practice, arts management, museum studies, and heritage studies.

In-Person Venues

Schedule

Adelaide

Collab
Police Barracks Building Level 1
South Australian Museum, North Terrace,
Adelaide, SA 5000

Melbourne

Asia Society
Level 2, Building 8,
RMIT University,
368-374 Swanston St,
Melbourne, VIC 3000

Sydney

Room A101, A Block
UNSW Art & Design
Oxford St & Greens Rd,
Paddington, NSW 2021

Wellington

Room WIG 202
Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington
139 Vivian Street,
Te Aro, Wellington

AEST

9:00-9:15am

9:15-10:20am

10:20-10:30am

10:30-11:00am

11:00-12:15pm

12:15-12:45pm

12:45-1:50pm

1:50-2:00pm

2:00-2:10pm

2:10-3:35pm

3:35-3:50pm

3:50-3:55pm

NZST

11:00-11:15am

11:15-12:20pm

12:20-12:30pm

12:30-1:00pm

1:00-2:15pm

2:15-2:45pm

2:45-3:50pm

3:50-4:00pm

4:00-4:10pm

4:10-5:35pm

5:35-5:50pm

5:50-5:55pm

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Panel 1: Institutional Afterlives

Soh Kay Min
Leo Bagus Purnomo
Debbi Min

Moderated by Shannon Xiao
Feedback by Tammy Wong Hulbert

Lunch (aligned to NZST)

Keynote Address

Dr Chris Parkinson

Lunch (aligned to AEST)

Panel 2: Colonial Afterlives

Eldrick Yuji Raphael S. Los Baños
Ahmed Abduqader Mohammed Ahmed
Ar-Em Bañas

Moderated by June Miskell
Feedback by Olivier Krischer

Break

Panel 3: Material Afterlives

Minying Zhang
Arif Furqan
Danni Lin
Qian Yao Wang

Moderated by Joella Kiu
Feedback by Alex Burchmore

Closing Remarks

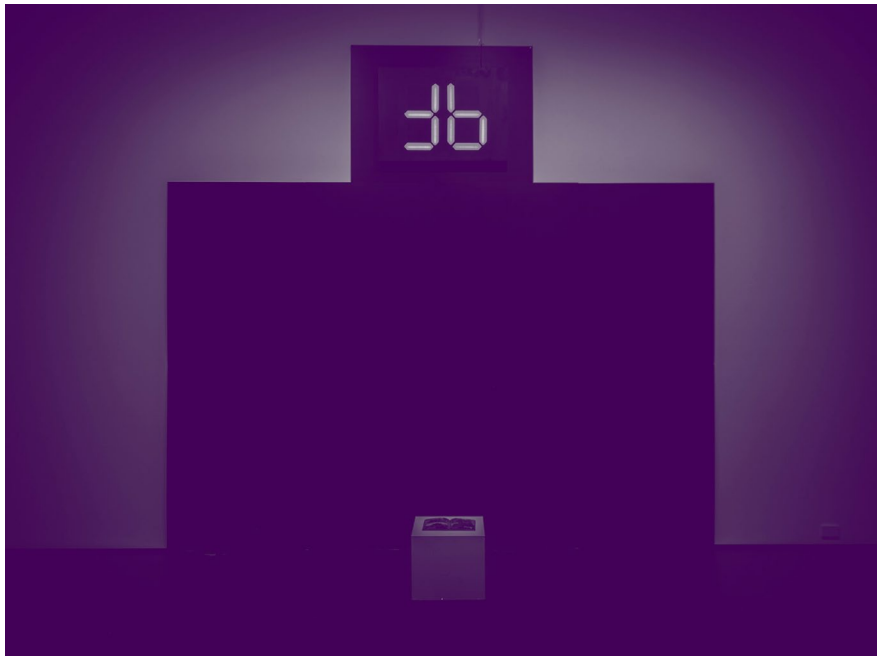
Keynote Address

Du Du Da Da: Fragments of an Afterlife of Practicing Practices

Dr Chris Parkinson

Peering through the surface of “The Window” and sitting at “The Wall,” Parkinson presents a reproduction of urban surfaces as sites of dialectic potential. Through engaging surfaces, Parkinson will present a developing understanding of a self-designated practice—*refractive practice*—where the indexical, the interpretive and the abstract mingle in the margins of cross cultural collaboration revealing the affective power of the relational through the materiality of surfaces. The late photographer Ray K. Metzker insisted upon an “interruption to pictorial veracity” in his practice. Says Metzker: “A lot of my work is about events, but a lot is about fragmentation. You have to break something down in order to have the parts synthesise.”¹ Beginning with a fragmented reproduction of an ethnographic image exhibited as part of research into the Indonesian Art Collective, Survive! Garage, Parkinson’s presentation brings urban rhythm, space, time, fact, fiction and ethnographic performativity to bear upon a practice informed through Henri Lefebvre’s concept of “spectral analysis” in which “something apparently simple is *refracted* through a prism to reveal, however incompletely, its elements and history.”²

1 Mee-Lai Stone. “New Ways of Seeing: The Abstract Genius of Ray K. Metzker,” *The Guardian*. Online. Available: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2021/feb/03/abstract-genius-ray-k-metzker-photographs-in-pictures>.
2 Dawn Lyon, *What is Rhythmanalysis?* (London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 23.



Dr Chris Parkinson, *THE MONUMENTAL RUPTURE OF THE UN.DE.BATA.BLE CYCLE OF THE MO(U)RNING AND THE NIGHT*, 2024. Photo: Dan Sibley.



Dr Chris Parkinson
Photo: Juan Castro

Dr Chris Parkinson is a multi-disciplined artist engaging practice, research and programming across academia, the public sector, independent consulting and publishing. His research focuses on the production of public, urban space through collaborative and collective art practices, urban surface studies, informal economies and the governance of criminalised practices. Parkinson’s collaborative practices have been shaped through art collectivism and sustain a strong connection to the Southeast Asian region. His 2010 book, *Peace of Wall: Street Art from East Timor*, is described as a “book of evocative photojournalism capturing an important moment in East Timor’s history through its walls.” His PhD (2025) studied the Indonesian Art Collective SURVIVE! Garage through practice-led research, linking a global history of art collectives to Indonesian creative practices through the sociological framework of Henri Lefebvre. It found new modes of engaging rhythm as theoretical analysis and creative methodology in a cross-cultural artistic context. Working primarily through lens-based processes and practices, Parkinson retains his roots to graffiti through subverting contemporary letters through concepts indebted to seriality and abstraction, rhythm and affect, text and subtext.

Panel 1

Institutional Afterlives

Citational Crosswinds: Elemental Historiographies from the Afterlives of Artists' Archives

Soh Kay Min, University of Westminster

This paper explores how citing and cross-referencing elemental traces latent within the artists' archives of Anthony Chin (b.1969, Singapore), Ho Tzu Nyen (b.1976, Singapore), and Nakaya Fujiko (b.1933, Japan) could produce more-than-human historiographies connecting Singapore, Japan, and the UK, across the coordinates of dominant wartime and Cold War crosswinds. Across academia, citation is a foundational and formal apparatus through which discourses are kept alive and evolving; within artistic and curatorial research, however, citational methods are unregulated and formally experimental, frequently crossing the thresholds of artwork and archive, authorship and assemblage. Within this constellation, artists' archives are unique entities, constituted of fragments of the afterlives of artworks and artistic research, yet often an overlooked bibliographic resource inviting new incarnations of knowing. Attending to the imprints of heat, humidity, wind, and fog within and around these archives, this paper sketches out how methods of citation can be meaningfully applied to curatorial research.

Soh Kay Min's curatorial interests revolve around the weather, elemental aesthetics, and wartime and Cold War political ecologies. They are currently a doctoral researcher at the Centre for Research and Education in Arts and Media (CREAM), University of Westminster.

Expanded Batik: Judith Butler's Performativity and the Subversion of Indonesian Batik

Leo Bagus Purnomo, Monash University

These works were inspired by Judith Butler's concept of performativity, which posits that gender is not innate, but constituted through iterative citational acts and utterances. In this context, gender is not merely embodied and performed, but shaped by scripts and sanctions. This resonates with my experience as an artist of colour, where certain expressions of identity—of not only gender, but also race and ethnicity—are accepted or even celebrated, while others are overlooked or rendered invisible. Applying Butler's framework, I explored how Indonesian identity could be subverted through its performative iterations. To do this, I developed a fabric dying process which combines traditional Indonesian batik techniques with wax-emulsion screenprinting. The resulting works constitute an identity that resembles my Indonesian diaspora identity—something layered and a little messy, which resists the rigid norms and expectations of traditional batik.

Leo Bagus Purnomo is a Naarm/Melbourne-based artist and researcher, born in Central Java, Indonesia. Working across multiple mediums—including painting, performance, and lukisan—his practice examines epistemic structures and the ways they shape our understanding of ourselves and the world.



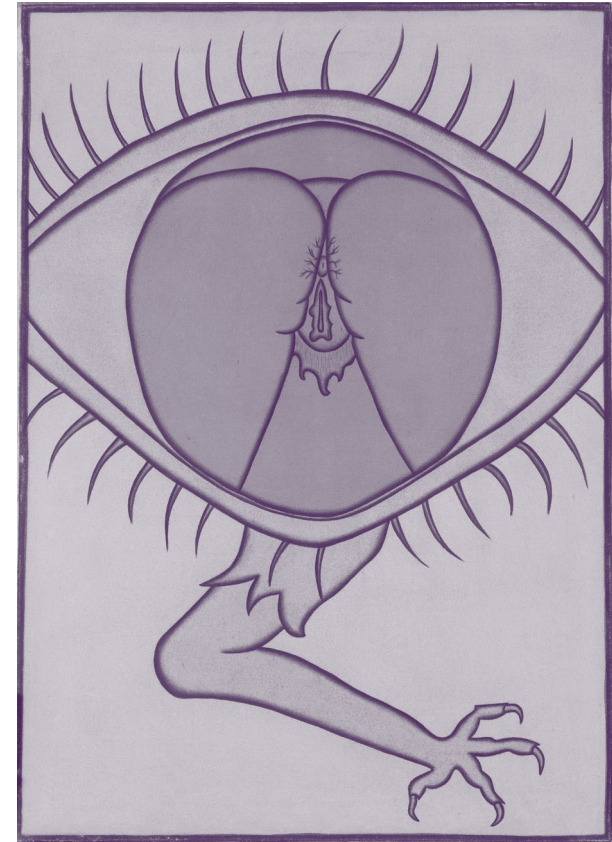
Leo Bagus Purnomo, *Untitled*, 2024, synthetic dye on cotton-silk voile, MFA critique installation shot. Courtesy of the artist.

Easing Her Heartache Through Painting: The Materials and Techniques of I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih (1966–2006)

Debbi Min, University of Melbourne

I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih (1966–2006), or Murni as she preferred to be addressed, was positioned as a trailblazer and feminist icon in Indonesian art. Despite her early passing at the age of 39, Murni's paintings left a significant and enduring impact on the art world. While she received significant posthumous attention from art historians and curators in recent years, existing scholarship has predominantly focused on her biography, trauma, and the risqué themes and subject matter in her paintings. Even though she was acknowledged for her creativity and innovation, little to no research has examined Murni's artistic process, her materials, tools, and techniques. This research reveals the physical materiality of Murni's painting practice with technical art history as its main theoretical framework. It highlights the importance of conservation material science in protecting Murni's artistic record for future generations and contributes to her wish to build a foundation.

Debbi Min is a recent graduate of the Grimwade Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation, the University of Melbourne. She was previously a conservation intern at the National Gallery of Victoria, specialising in photographic materials and works on paper.



I Gusti Ayu Kadek Murniasih, *Merangang (Stimulate)*, 2002. 60.80 x 3.50 x 86.0 cm, acrylic on canvas. Collection of Project Eleven.

Panel 2

Colonial Afterlives

“Anachronistic by Intention”: Cian Dayrit’s Appropriations of Dean Worcester’s Photographs, 2019–2021

Eldrick Yuji Raphael S. Los Baños, National Taipei University of Education

Between 1890 and 1913, American colonial administrator Dean Worcester assembled a collection of 15,000 photographs from across the Philippines. Studies have explored how his images portrayed Filipinos in racist, paternalistic ways to justify American rule as a civilizer. With increased scholarship and public access to his images in Western institutions, artists in the Philippines and its diaspora have engaged with Worcester’s archive within the past decade through appropriation. This paper focuses on textile works by Filipino artist Cian Dayrit that playfully annotate Worcester photographs from the University of Michigan’s collections. Through formal and contextual analyses of photographs and their afterlives in Dayrit’s tapestries between 2019 and 2021, this study examines appropriation as a method of resistance to the colonial gaze. It argues that Dayrit’s transformations of Worcester’s photographs highlight the continuity of past sociopolitical conditions in today’s Philippines by incorporating references to Philippine history, art history, and current affairs.

Eldrick Yuji Los Baños is a graduate student under the Ministry of Education Taiwan Scholarship in the Critical and Curatorial Studies of Contemporary Art (CCSCA) program at the National Taipei University of Education. He has been active as a curator, art writer, and administrator across Metro Manila, Dubai, and Taipei.

Digital Afterlives, Epistemological Authority, and the Recontextualisation of Asian Art in Australasian Museum Collections

Ahmed Abduqader Mohammed Ahmed, Sichuan University

The large-scale digitisation of museum collections has created a new category of afterlife for Asian art objects held in Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand institutions: the digital surrogate. Presented through online portals and high-resolution repositories, these digital doubles promise democratised access yet simultaneously inherit—and sometimes deepen—the epistemological hierarchies embedded in original acts of colonial collection and classification. Drawing on post-colonial museum studies and discourse analysis of three Australasian institutional case studies, this research examines how digitisation workflows reproduce colonial taxonomies through legacy terminology and unreformed catalogue records, amplified now by algorithmic searchability and global reach. It also identifies countervailing practices, including community-sourced metadata and collaborative digital repatriation, where the digital afterlife becomes a site of reclamation. Ultimately, this study argues that digitisation is not a neutral act of preservation but a renewed interpretation demanding the same critical scrutiny as physical exhibition and acquisition.

Ahmed Abduqader Mohammed Ahmed is a postgraduate researcher at Sichuan University specialising in post-colonial museum studies and the digital mediation of Asian art collections. Their research examines how institutional digitisation practices shape cultural meaning and epistemological authority. They are currently completing their MA in Art History/Museum Studies.



The rule book and tactile components of *On the Bones of BATALA*, a folk-horror tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) by Ar-Em Bañas. Photo: Stef Muyco.

On the Bones of BATALA: Exploring the Colonization of the Tagalog Region through Tabletop Role-playing Game Design

Ar-Em Bañas, Massey University

Growing up near Manila in the Tagalog region, which historian William Manchester described as the second most destroyed Allied city during World War II, I was taught a version of history that minimised over four centuries of colonial violence and trauma. During my Master of Design studies, I conducted in-depth research into Filipino colonial trauma and my Tagalog heritage. I recontextualised feelings, experiences, and research findings with colonial violence, trauma, and hegemonic narratives through a tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) utilising metaphors, creative depictions of Tagalog culture, history, and folklore, and the Punk Game Framework developed by Vitor Fiacadori Costa. This resulted in the folk-horror TTRPG, *On the Bones of BATALA* (OTBOB). For this paper, I will discuss OTBOB's development, including how cultural objects (i.e., sungka, palm-leaf manuscripts) inspired its mechanics and design. I will also discuss playtest results and how OTBOB's gameplay provided the prospect for collective healing among players.

Ar-Em Bañas is a Filipino PhD student at Massey University, Aotearoa, where they graduated with a Master of Design qualification. During their studies, they incorporated self-led cultural research with their creative practice by developing a folk-horror tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) inspired by pre- and colonial Tagalog history, culture, and folklore.



Japanese, Rag kimono (Boro kimono), Meiji period, 1868–1912. Cotton. 140.7 cm (centre back) × 129.5 cm (cuff to cuff). National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased, NGV Asian Art Acquisition Fund, 2014 (Accession no. 2014.23). Photo: National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Public Domain.

Panel 3

Material Afterlives

Reawakening the Silk Road: Digital Afterlives of Asian Material Culture at Macau's Poly MGM Museum

Minying Zhang, RMIT University

This article examines two digital encounters in Silk Roads Beyond Borders at Poly MGM Museum, Macau, exploring how digital mediation creates a diverse afterlife for Silk Road material culture as Asian art. The first is an OLED interactive display, which brings the objects to life through dynamic presentation while maintaining their material presence. The second is the Marco Polo VR Experience, which transforms object-based cultural memory into a first-person virtual journey guided by the avatar of Marco Polo. Drawing on embodiment and cultural memory theories, and based on the author's autoethnographic notes and photographic documentation from personal visits, this article explores how visitors shift from observers of relics to travellers and witnesses within historical narratives. It argues that immersive technology does not simply revive the objects themselves, but rather reshapes the afterlife of Asian art by determining how cultural memory is transmitted, embodied and reinterpreted.

Minying Zhang is a PhD candidate in Art under a joint programme between Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) and RMIT University. Her research interests include digital humanities, cultural studies, museology, audience research, and aesthetic studies.

The Afterlives of New Order Artefacts: Family Photographs, Monuments, and the Remembering of the New Order Indonesia (1966–1998)

Arif Furqan, Visual Artist-Researcher

This paper examines the afterlives of two memory saving devices popularized during Indonesia's New Order regime (1966–1998): family photographs and monuments. While monuments were designed to stabilize official narratives of nationalism, family photographs embodied the regime's narratives within everyday domestic life. Drawing on the *Unhistoried* archive, an archive-based project initiated by the author, the study explores how both undergo processes of decay, decontextualization, and reinterpretation. Following the collapse of the regime, monuments are becoming ghosts of historical authority; neglected relics, navigational markers, or repurposed sites, while newer 'themes' replace local and communal identities. Meanwhile, domestic family archives gradually erode through digital transformation. As found and donated photographs are recirculated through archives, exhibitions, and artistic research, their audience shifts from intimate familial viewers to broader publics. Detached from singular biographies, these images become vernacular sites of memory where traces of developmentalism persist while generating new historical and cultural meanings.

Arif Furqan is a researcher and visual artist whose practice examines the complex intersections of memory, history, and identity, with a focus on intimate domestic narratives. His work centers on intimate domestic narratives and the fragile mechanisms of memory. In 2017, he initiated *Unhistoried*—an ongoing archive-based project examining vernacular documentation practices and the memory landscape of Indonesian families during the New Order regime (1960s–1990s).



Sheng Bao Yang Wei, donation plaque, 1893, carved, painted and gilded wood, See Yup Temple, Melbourne. Post-fire display in custom-made glazed case. Photo: Danni Lin.

After the Fire: The Afterlife of the 1893 Donation Plaque Sheng Bao Yang Wei at Melbourne's See Yup Temple

Danni Lin, University of Melbourne

Made in Guangdong in 1893, Sheng Bao Yang Wei is a carved, painted, and gilded wooden donation plaque long hung in the main hall of Melbourne's See Yup Temple. This paper argues that the plaque's afterlife emerged through fire damage, conservation research, and protective display within an active religious setting. Associated with Guandi worship, it reflects material links between Chinese migrant communities in Australia and craft, trade, and cultural networks in South China. After the 2024 fire, a soot veil covered much of the surface; red and gold survived discontinuously, while the carving and inscription remained legible. Scientific examination confirmed cinnabar-type red and gold-rich material at selected locations, but also showed that the surviving evidence was too fragmentary to reconstruct the plaque's earlier surface appearance in full. Its installation in a custom-made glazed case inside the temple marked a new stage in its history, changing visibility, accessibility, and interpretation.

Danni Lin is a PhD candidate at the Robert Cripps Institute for Cultural Conservation, University of Melbourne. Her research forms part of the ARC project The See Yup Temple: Chinese Australian Collections, Recovery and Conservation and examines the material biographies, values, and conservation of objects at Melbourne's See Yup Temple.

From Environment to Everyday Life: Recontextualising Zhu Legeng's Ceramics

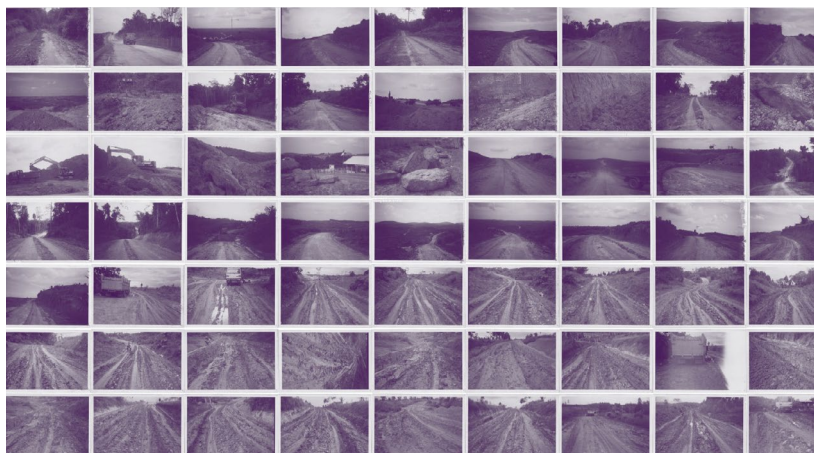
Qianyao Wang, RMIT University

This paper examines how Zhu Legeng's ceramics are recontextualised as they move from environmental installations into everyday cultural settings in contemporary China. Based on first-hand research, including artist interviews, fieldwork, photographic documentation, and site records, it traces the development of Zhu's practice from large-scale ceramic works commissioned for hospitals, concert halls, hotels, airports, and other public spaces to more recent projects centred on tea tables, tableware, tearooms, restaurants, and cultural spaces near the Suzhou Imperial Brick Kiln. Rather than viewing these settings as separate from artistic practice, this paper argues that they constitute new contexts in which Zhu's ceramics acquire new meanings. Through local material culture, tea practices, dining rituals, spatial design, touch, everyday use, and social interaction, the works shift from environmental artworks to objects embedded in daily life. This process of recontextualisation transforms not only how the ceramics are experienced and used but also how their materiality, visibility, and cultural value are understood. By examining these changing contexts, the paper demonstrates how contemporary ceramics continue to generate new meanings beyond their original sites of production and display.

Qianyao Wang is a joint PhD candidate in Art at RMIT University and Macau University of Science and Technology. Wang's doctoral research, Mapping Therapeutic Arts Practices in China: Historical Trajectories and Cultural Contexts, focuses on the history of visual art therapy and the role of ceramic art in emotional regulation.



Zhu Legeng, *Ceramic*, 2025, 2.8-3.0m, Suzhou, China. Photo: Qianyao Wang.



Found photographs from a military family during transmigration project in Sumatra, Indonesia.
(Unknown author, c. 1980s. Archive collection of *Unhistoried*)



Minying Zhang. *Travelling Memory: The Digital Afterlife of the Silk Road*, 2026, computer-based digital collage combining original field photography with AI-assisted image generation. Courtesy the artist.

Acknowledgements

The 2026 AN4AA symposium organising team would like to thank all involved in realising *The Afterlives of Asian Art*, with special thanks to all our paper presenters and our keynote speaker, Dr Chris Parkinson.

We are also grateful to all host spaces supporting the in-person/hybrid participation of symposium attendees across Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne and Wellington in 2026, at UNSW Art & Design, Collab at the South Australian Museum, RMIT University, and The University of Wellington.

Coordinating Group 2023-2026

Alex Burchmore, The Australian National University
Michelle Antoinette, Monash University
Russell Kely, Art Gallery of South Australia
Olivier Krischer, University of New South Wales
Tammy Wong Hulbert, RMIT University

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2023-2026

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Asep Topan, University of Sydney
Mita Chowdhury, RMIT University
Pratyay Raha, RMIT University
Yuexiu Shen, Art Gallery of South Australia

2026-2029

Fabiola Rocco, University of Melbourne
Joella Kiu, Monash University
June Miskell, University of New South Wales
Ka Yan So, Monash University
Maria Karageorge, University of Sydney
Ming Liew, RMIT University
Shannon Xiao, University of Wellington
Yuki Kawakami, Monash University



Cian Dayrit, *Squad Goals*, 2019, objects, embroidery and digital print on textile, 51 x 64 in.
Courtesy of the artist.

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Cover image: Ho Tzu Nyen, *Hotel Aporia*, 2019, installation view, Aichi Triennale 2019, Nagoya and Toyota City, Japan, 1 August–14 October 2019. Site-specific installation at the Kiraku-Tei, Toyota City. Six-channel video projection, twenty-four channel sound, automated fans, lights, transducers and show control system. Photo: Takeshi Hirabayashi. Courtesy Ho Tzu Nyen and Kiang Malingue.