Conference

« The tree that hides the forest »
19-20 November 2021

INHA, salle Ingres,
2 rue de Vivienne, Paris 75001

Wu Guanzhong – Tree roots 树根, 1980s. Ink and colour on paper. Courtesy Hong Kong Museum of Art

Each communication lasts 25 minutes plus 5 minutes for Q/A
Participants may follow the workshop online. To request a Zoom link please register with secretariat@asie-sorbonne.fr on the 18th at the latest.
The Asie-Sorbonne Association organizes a two-days’ conference with the aim of reflecting on the dynamics of the relationship with trees—and beyond, with nature—in East and South Asia by comparison with the West. We postulate that this relationship, be it in art, in religious practices or in agroforestry or even in leisure practices, is part of a paradigmatic relationship with nature that is determined by an imaginary of the tree, memories associated with the landscape, and cultural practices. The Chinese concept of qi (in Japan ki), i.e. the vital energy shared between man and nature, as well as the specific perception of trees in Chinese and Japanese philosophy, can be called upon to support this implicit cultural dimension.

The forest as a place of enlightenment is also essential for Buddhists and Jains, and the representation of Yaksha and Yakshini testifies to the role of the tree as a source of life, sometimes ambivalent, in the Indian tradition, where certain tree species are still considered sacred today. Such representations existed in the West before the Industrial revolution, and then in reaction to it, e.g., in the Gothic, and in European Romanticism or in American Transcendentalism.

The workshop addresses a double question: How do cultural, artistic, religious, classical or popular, traditional or contemporary practices, as well philosophical/aesthetic theories bear witness to a certain view of the forest; and how do they potentially pre-condition the actual experience of forest immersion? The question will be approached in the context of East and South Asia, or, by comparison, in the West. An immersive experience in a forest will be organized on the 21st of November.

**Keywords**

*art and nature ; anthropocene ; nature and culture*

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**19 November**

9:30 a.m. **Welcoming** participants (coffee)

9:50- 10:00 am **Introduction** Christine Vial Kayser

10:00- 11:00 a.m. **Keynote speaker:**

**Georges Metailié**, Honorary Research director at the CNRS and member of the Alexandre Koyré Center for the History of Science and Technology (Paris).

*(Title to be announced)*

Questions (15 minutes)

11:00-12:00 a.m.

**Session I The symbolism of the tree in the Middle Ages in Asia**

- **Fréderic Girard**, Emeritus Director of Studies at the EFEO, specialist in classical Japanese studies.

  *The tree in Buddhist Japan*


  *The tree in ancient China: worship, resources, and decline*

12:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. **Lunch on site**
Session II  How the past informs the present
- **Benoit Jacquet**, historian, EFEO lecturer, teacher at ENSA Paris La Villette. *(via Zoom)*
  *The column that supports the forest: how to revitalize a cultural landscape? Example of the Kitayama region in Japan*

- **Geetha Ganapathy-Doré**, Research-accredited Associate Professor of English, specialist of Postcolonial studies, Université Sorbonne Paris Nord. **In English**
  *The Tree and the Forest in Indian Culture: Making Meaning of the Multiple Narratives*

- **Mary Picone**, UMR CNRS-Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, China, Korea, Japan. *(via Zoom)*
  *Immersing oneself in the forests of Tôhoku (north-east Japan). Reflections on the past and contemporary artistic practices.*

Session III  The Tree as Alter ego in Chinese Painting
- **Li Xiaohong**, Associate professor, University of Artois
  *A tree branch is enough to reveal the forest or the "severed branch" (zhezhi 折枝) technique in Chinese painting*

- **Yizhou Wang**, Ph.D. Candidate, Chinese Art History, Institute for East Asian Art History, Center for Asian and Cross-Cultural Studies, University of Heidelberg, Germany. **In English**
  *Voices of Willows in Crisis: (Wo)men-Tree Interface in Artists’ World of Ming-Qing China (17th c)*

  **Coffee Break (20 minutes)**

- **Yingzhi Zhao**, Ph.D. in Chinese Literature and Culture, Harvard Univ. *(via Zoom and in English)*
  *Social Engagement and Spiritual Transcendence: Forests in the Seventeenth Century Chinese imagination*

- **Marie Laureillard**, Associate professor in Chinese Studies, University of Lyon 2
  *The imaginary of the tree and the forest in Chinese art today*

- **Isabelle Davy**, PhD in art theory, associate researcher at AIAC-Paris 8.
  *Zao Wou-Ki: blandness of the tree and forests of ink*

End of the sessions

November 20th
9am Welcoming (coffee)

9:30-10:30 a.m.
Session IV Trees in Asian architecture and gardens
- Giada Ricci, Architect and Scenographer, PhD, EHESS
  Exhibiting nature: the tree in the museum in Japan
- Hongyue Liu-Deguillaume, architect and sinologist, doctoral student at CRCAO
  The tree and the urban landscape in pre-modern China

Coffee break

10:45 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.
Session V Narrative space as virtual forest
- Sonakshi Srivastava, Mphil student Indraprastha University, Delhi (via Zoom, in English)
  Arbo(Real) Entanglements, and Eco-Grief in Kiran Desai's Fiction
- Jacline Moriceau, honorary professor of visual arts, research associate at Langarts.
  Destruction and reclaiming meaning: The tree and more broadly nature at the heart of the work of two Japanese creators Kurosawa Akira, and Teshigahara Hiroshi
- Chloé Pabrez, MCF in Korean Studies, Inalco.
  Forests and liminality in Korean video games
- Christine Vial Kayser, museum curator, HDR, associate researcher Héritages (Cergy-Pontoise), and president of the Association Asie-Sorbonne.
  The forest as a reservoir of the unconscious in the work of the Thai artist Apichatpong Weerasethakul, and Macha Makeïeff

12:40-13:15 p.m. KE Chin-yuan, documentary filmmaker, specialized in humans to nature relationships, will present his film Sacred forest (2019) and what it revealed on the practical/sacred relationship to the forest.
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXWEj5KJuJ4)
Q/A
ENDS 1:15 pm

Sunday 21st

Immersion in the forest of Meudon. 10 people, on registration
Departure from Montparnasse station at 8.30am. Get off at Chaville rive gauche. or Meet at Chaville rive gauche at 9.10 am.
Walk from 9.30am to 12.30 pm. It is possible to organize an afternoon walk (if 10 more people register)

Under the guidance of Marie Larcher Essamet, ecotherapist, we will discover the forest as a living envelope that interacts with our body. By reconditioning our attention to the opening of all our senses — by walking slowly, breathing the earth, tasting the leaves, lying
on the ground, talking to the trees — we are invited to modify our perceptive and cognitive relationship to this environment. Inspired by Japanese forest baths or Shinrin Yoku, this walk also aims to make us reflect on the role of our pre-existing representations of the forest in the perception of the forest. It is therefore part of a research framework that follows on from the workshop of 19 and 20 November.

See the attached video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lGG9MCHgHEA&ab_channel=Maisond%C3%A9cotherapie.fr/shinrin-yoku-2/

**Tariff**
The participation fee is **10€** for Asie-Sorbonne members (membership of **25€** / **10€** for students, deductible from Income tax for French resident) and **40€** for non-members.

**How to register and pay**
*To register* please write to **secretariat@asiesorbonne.fr**.

*To pay*
- by bank transfer on the association's account. Please specify the reason for payment as "membership fee" or "forest immersion".
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- by credit card on Helloasso.