

# Abstract

Art history has long framed modernism as a Western, twentieth-century phenomenon, positioning it within a largely Euro-American narrative of rupture and innovation. If, however, modernism and postmodernism are recast as heuristic rather than strictly chronological categories, a more expansive and globally attuned account of artistic practice becomes possible. This paper proposes the concept of the “pastmodern” to foreground early modern East Asian practices that anticipate strategies commonly associated with modernity, including performative production, ecological and found-material approaches, minimalist abstraction, and sustained inquiries into presence and absence. Rather than advancing a reductive conceptualism in which the idea supersedes the object, these practices stage a dynamic dialectic between idea and material form, with materiality actively resisting and co-producing meaning.

Through this sustained tension between transcendence and immanence, early modern East Asian art critically engaged conditions later identified with modernity and even postmodernity. In negotiating rupture and continuity, deconstruction and synthesis, such works challenge linear genealogies and destabilize East-West and old-new binaries, ultimately proposing a polychronic, anachronistic understanding of modernity within global art history.

# East Asian Abstract Art in Rearview Mirror

Yin-Cheng Distinguished Lectures in Buddhism

## Keynote Speaker

J.P. Park (University of Oxford)

*“De-Abstracting the Abstract:  
Form and Pastmodern in Early Modern East Asia”*

## Panel Discussion

*Seven Takes on the Matter*

Saturday 2026

May 2<sup>nd</sup>  
2:00PM ET

Lower Level Auditorium,  
485 Broadway  
Harvard University  
Cambridge, MA



CAMLab  
FAS | HARVARD



Department of  
History of Art + Architecture

YIN-CHENG  
Distinguished Lecture Series  
on BUDDHISM



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證佛學講座

# Schedule

## 2:00-2:15. Welcome and Introductory Remarks

- Eugene Wang, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Professor of Asian Art; Founding Director of Harvard CAMLab
- Rey-Sheng Her, Deputy CEO of Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation

## 2:15-3:00. Keynote

- J.P. Park, June and Simon Li Professor in the History of Chinese Art, University of Oxford. “De-Abstracting the Abstract: Form and Pastmodern in Early Modern East Asia”

## 3:00-3:15. Coffee Break

## 3:15-5:00. Seven Takes on the Matter

Chair and Moderator: Jinah Kim, George P. Bickford Professor of Indian and South Asian Art, Harvard University

### Speakers

- Shao-Lan Hertel, Director for the Museum for East Asian Art, Cologne, Germany.
- Alvin Li, Curator of International Art, Tate Modern, UK.
- Yukio Lippit, Jeffrey T. Chambers and Andrea Okamura Professor of the History of Art and Architecture, Harvard University
- Melissa McCormick, Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Japanese Art and Culture, Harvard University
- Eugene Wang, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Professor of Asian Art, Harvard University
- Aida Wong, Nathan Cummings and Robert B. and Beatrice C. Mayer Chair in Fine Arts, and Professor of Fine Arts, and East Asian Studies, Brandeis University
- Alan Yeung, Zhou Family Curator of Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy, MFA, Boston

**5:00-5:15.** Chenchen Lü, Associate Director of Harvard CAMLab - Briefing on CAMLab projects.

**5:15.** Reception in Harvard CAMLab Cave, Lower Level, 485 Broadway, Cambridge



**Keynote Speaker**  
**J. P. Park**

June and Simon Li Professor,  
History of Art, University of Oxford



**Panelist**  
**Shao-Lan Hertel**

Director for the Museum for East  
Asian Art, Cologne, Germany



**Co-Host**  
**Rey Sheng Her**  
Deputy CEO of Buddhist Tzu Chi  
Charity Foundation



**Panelist**  
**Yukio Lippit**

Jeffrey T. Chambers and Andrea  
Okamura Professor of the History of  
Art and Architecture,  
Harvard University



**Panelist**  
**Alvin Li**

Curator of International Art,  
Tate Modern, UK.



**Co-Host**  
**Chenchen Lu**  
Associate Director of CAMLab



**Chair and Moderator**  
**Jinah Kim**

George P. Bickford Professor of  
Indian and South Asian Art,  
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**Alan Yeung**  
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## Speakers & Panelists