

# Dr Alex Burchmore

Lecturer, Museum and Heritage Studies  
Discipline of Art History, School of Art, Communication and English  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Sydney

## Education

- 2019 PhD (Chinese Art History), Centre for Art History and Art Theory, School of Art & Design, Australian National University
- 2016 Chinese Classics and Culture program, National Taiwan University
- 2015 Intensive Chinese-language study, Beijing Foreign Studies University
- 2013 MA (Art History), University of Adelaide  
MA (Curatorial & Museum Studies), University of Adelaide
- 2011 BVisArts (Honours, First Class), University of South Australia

## Grants, Awards and Prizes

- 2020 College Art Association International Member Conference Travel Grant
- 2018 Oxford Art Journal Essay Prize for Early Career Researchers
- 2018 Art Association of Australia and New Zealand Best Scholarly Article in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art
- 2017 ANU Research School of Humanities and the Arts Visiting Scholars Grant
- 2016 Kathleen Woodroffe PhD Scholarship in the Humanities/Social Sciences
- 2016 National Taiwan University Chinese Classics and Culture scholarship
- 2014 Prime Minister's Australia Asia Postgraduate Endeavour Award
- 2014 Australia Postgraduate Award
- 2013 Museums Australia (SA) Prize in Curatorial & Museum Studies
- 2012 Ashgate/Lund Humphries Essay Prize in Modern Art Studies

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## Publications

### **Books and book chapters**

*New Export China: Translations Across Time and Place in Contemporary Chinese Porcelain Art*. Berkeley: University of California Press – forthcoming in 2023.

The fugitive luxury of porcelain in contemporary Chinese art. In *The Allure of Matter: Materiality Across Chinese Art*, eds. Orianna Cacchione and Wei-Cheng Lin, 276-303. Chicago: Smart Museum of Art/University of Chicago Press – forthcoming in 2021.

Chinese art. In *HG60: Hamilton Gallery 60th Anniversary*, 142-67. Hamilton: Hamilton Gallery, 2021.

### **Peer-reviewed journals**

The Aesthetics of Export in Chinese Art Outside China. *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* 9, no. 1-2 (July 2022): 19-43.

Material Chineseness: Ink and porcelain in contemporary art beyond national borders. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 21, no. 1 (September 2021): 58-74.

Guan Wei's 'Australerie' ceramics and the binary bind of identity politics. *Index Journal*, no. 1 (March 2020).

'Splendid Deformities': An emancipatory critique of cultural homogeneity in Sin-ying Ho's deformed ceramics. *View: Theories and Practices of Visual Culture* 24 (January 2020).

*La maladie de porcelaine*: Liu Jianhua's *Regular/Fragile* (2007) at Oxburgh Hall and the history of massed porcelain display in English aristocratic interiors. *Oxford Art Journal* 42, no. 3 (December 2019): 253-81.

Drifting through the Porcelain Capital: Art residencies and the enforced continuity of an illustrious past in Jingdezhen, China. *Kunstlicht* 39, no. 2 (2018): 39-49.

Negotiating 'Chinese-Australian' Identity: Ah Xian's *Dr John Yu* (2004) and his *China China* series (1998-2004). *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 17, no. 1 (2017): 33-53.

### **Other journals, magazines, and blogs**

Salvaging Southeast Asian History: Shipwrecks and Chinese Blue-and-White. *New Mandala* (22 October 2021).

The Chau Chak Wing Museum in Sydney, Australia. *Mainly Museums* (22 June 2021).

Floral resistance to authoritarianism and incarceration in porcelain installations by Ai Weiwei and Cai Guo-Qiang. *esse arts + opinions*, no. 99 (April 2020): 70-77.

Remembering people and places past/passed in contemporary ceramics by Ah Xian, Ai Weiwei, Sin-ying Ho and Liu Jianhua. *Garland*, no. 15 (2019).

Smashing vases: Ceramics and the aesthetics of destruction in works by Ai Weiwei and Liu Jianhua. *Espace Art Actuel*, no. 122 (Spring-Summer 2019): 36-45.

The *China/Avant-Garde* exhibition and Xiao Lu: 30 Years On. *4A Papers*, no. 6 (2019).

The visual and tactile experience of the monochrome: Mapping surfacescapes in Ai Weiwei's *Colored Vases* and Liu Jianhua's *Container* series. *The Asian Arts Society of Australia Review* 28, no. 1 (March 2019): 4-6

Sin-ying Ho's Garden of Eden. *The Asian Arts Society of Australia Review* 26, no. 4 (December 2017): 12-14.

Flesh and Clay: Ah Xian's Porcelain Body-Casts. *Fine Print*, no. 8 (2016).

### **Exhibition reviews**

'Xu Zhen: Eternity Vs. Evolution' at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. *Ran Dian*, 16 December 2020.

Bringing colour to forgotten histories in Gary Carsley's 'Chromophilia'. *Art Monthly Australasia Blog*, 18 November 2020.

The art of lockdown. *Art Monthly Australasia Blog*, 15 September 2020.

Love and conflict @ the National Portrait Gallery and UQ Art Museum. *Art Monthly Australasia Blog*, 2 September 2020.

The archive and the public square. *Art Monthly Australasia*, no. 324 (Winter 2020): 54-57.

Between art and life: The 8<sup>th</sup> Korea Artist Prize. *Art Monthly Australasia Blog*, 9 December 2019.

The factory-assemblist and the scholar-artist in the historiography of Chinese Art. *Art Monthly Australasia*, no. 319 (October 2019): 46-53.

Awakening unheard voices. *Art Monthly Australasia*, no. 318 (September 2019): 32-35.

Reigniting the past: Three explosive displays of Chinese art at the NGV. *Art Monthly Australasia Blog*, 28 June 2019.

Regional dialogue and homely conversation: 'Awakenings' at the National Gallery Singapore. *Art Monthly Australasia Blog*, 18 June 2019.

Pictures of transition: Contemporary paintings from Myanmar. *Art Monthly Australasia Blog*, 16 April 2019.

A meeting of heroes: Selections from the Townsend Collection of Chinese Woodcuts at the NGA. *Art Monthly Australasia Blog*, 6 October 2017.

Bounty: Nineteenth-century South Australian gold and silver. *Marmalade*, no. 1 (2013): 54.

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## **Current projects**

### ***Material Selves: The Entangled Biographies of People and Things***

A multi-author volume that will critically expand current models for understanding the dynamic relationship between people and things, tracing the central role of objects in the creation and performance of identity. The crucial innovation of the volume will be its focus on materials and the body, arguing for an 'object-centred' agency. Each chapter will present a case-study for this intersection of the objective and subjective in a range of cultural and chronological settings, adopting a transcultural and transhistorical approach. The central concept of a 'material self' draws inspiration from the theoretical framework of object biography, developed largely by scholars of material culture. While proponents of this methodology have tended to focus on the application of biographic methods to describe the 'lives' of certain objects, this volume will seek instead to uncover the complex entanglement of the personal and material. The central argument is that personhood and thingness are inextricably intertwined and largely defined by their conventional opposition, which also conceals the extent to which our concepts of self are derived from our participation in the material world. While race, gender, and culture are assigned at birth, identification with these and other facets of identity can only ever be partial and accomplished over time through processes of adaptation and combination revealed by the objects with which we adorn and surround ourselves.

### ***The 'Wonders' that Basham Saw***

Led by Associate Professor Chaitanya Sambrani of the Centre for Art History and Art Theory at the Australian National University, and in collaboration with colleagues at the National Gallery of Australia, National University of Singapore, and Oxford University's Ashmolean Museum, this project seeks to uncover and share the significance of an archive of images compiled by the late Professor A. L. Basham (1914-1986) during his tenure as Foundation Professor and Head of the Department of Oriental (later Asian) Civilizations at ANU (1965-1979). Professor Basham helped set up the Faculty of Oriental (later Asian) Studies and played a pioneering role in teaching and research in this area in

Australia and internationally. His book *The Wonder that Was India* (1954) became a signal study in the field. Basham undertook extensive fieldwork in South Asia and was a keen photographer. His work parallels major scholarly investments made simultaneously by other scholars, including his Oxford contemporaries William Cohn (1880-1961), Douglas Barrett (1917-1992) and J.C. Harle (1920-2004), whose archives are held in the Ashmolean. The project also considers the role of Michael Sullivan (1916-2013), who worked in the then University of Malaya before moving to London and Oxford. The project revisits Basham's visual archive alongside those of his colleagues, analysing them as key ingredients in the historiographical construction of 'classical' civilizations in Asia.

### ***Jiaohua: Past and Present Practices of Educating the People***

Led by Professor Yingjie Guo with colleagues from the 'Chinese Philosophy and Culture' research group within the University of Sydney's China Studies Centre, this project uses the central concept of *jiaohua* to explore continuity and change in political and cultural practices in China from the Han Dynasty to the present from various perspectives, most notably Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist. The project is designed, in accordance with the group's mission, to 'examine the origin and development of Chinese philosophies and ways of thinking and interpreting the world, as well as their impact on society and culture; the influence of the past on the present; and indeed, how the present is read into the past'. My contribution to this project will be an investigation of 'The Role of Posters in the Education of the People', uncovering the extent to which political poster designers of the 1970s and 1980s adopted and adapted two fundamental tenets of Confucian governance: a belief in the need for the people to emulate appropriate role models, and the conviction that appropriate thought (orthodoxy) can be cultivated through performance of appropriate action (orthopraxy). As a case-study for these themes, I identify such Confucian tenets at work in a selection of posters acquired by the National Gallery of Australia between 1975 and 1989.

### ***Provenancing Southeast Asian Ceramics from the Chau Chak Wing Museum's Collection***

In collaboration with Dr James Flexner, Senior Lecturer in Historical Archaeology and Heritage; Dr Natali Pearson, Curriculum Coordinator for the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre; Dr Shuxia Chen, Curator of the China Gallery at the Chau Chak Wing Museum; and Dr Elizabeth Carter, Facility Manager of Vibrational Spectroscopy at Sydney Analytical, this interdisciplinary pilot project will bring together researchers from archaeology, heritage studies, art history and analytical chemistry to examine Southeast Asian ceramics in the collection of the Chau Chak Wing Museum. These objects are under-researched, with limited information on where they were produced or how they came to be in the collection. The project will use innovative methodologies to produce a chemical characterisation that can provide information about place of origin, among other things, with a broader aim of improving the quality of the Museum's catalogue data while also contributing to a better understanding of how ceramics produced in Southeast Asia have circulated within global networks. Our preliminary scoping study has identified 28 objects of interest, including stoneware and porcelain from Thailand and Vietnam. Should this pilot project be successful in determining more information on these objects, there is scope to expand the project to examine the much larger Chinese and East Asian ceramic collections.

### **Panels, symposia, and workshops convened:**

- 2021 Making an impression in the contact zone. Panel at the Art Association of Australia and New Zealand (AAANZ) conference, Sydney, December 2021.
- 2020 The fragmented self: Objects from elsewhere and the search for new identities. Panel at the College Art Association (CAA) conference, Chicago, February 2020. Co-chair with Dr Robert Wellington.
- 2020 Objects from elsewhere: Transcultural constructions of identity. Panel at the CAA conference, Chicago, February 2020. Co-chair with Dr Wellington.
- 2017 The Transnational in Asian Art: Historical and Contemporary Contexts around Migration, Diaspora, Mobility and Cultural Flows. Postgraduate workshop, Centre for European Studies, Australian National University (ANU), September 2017. Co-convenor with Professors Caroline Turner and Jacqueline Lo, and Dr Elly Kent.
- 2017 Australian Council of University Art & Design Schools Annual Conference Committee member, School of Art & Design, ANU, September 2017.
- 2017 Moving Objects: A roundtable discussion of global currents in Asian art. Centre for Art History and Art Theory, ANU, April 2017.
- 2016 AAANZ Conference Committee member, SOA&D, ANU, December 2016.

### **Conference papers**

- 2021 The Modern Woodcut Movement beyond the Communist Canon. AAANZ Annual Conference, Sydney, December 2021.
- 2020 Chinese Communist Party posters at the National Gallery of Australia and ephemeral counter-narratives in the future direction of Australia-Asia relations. 23<sup>rd</sup> Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, Melbourne, July 2020 (cancelled due to COVID-19).
- 2020 Framing self/other relations through curatorial strategies of containment and classification in eighteenth-century porcelain display. CAA Annual Conference, Chicago, February 2020.
- 2018 The social context of massed porcelain display: Aesthetics, politics, and history in Liu Jianhua's installation of *Regular-Fragile* at Oxburgh Hall. AAANZ Annual Conference, Melbourne, December 2018.
- 2018 Speaking with/to/for artists and my efforts to find balance between these positions. *Issues in Asian Art Research* Graduate Workshop, University of Melbourne, August 2018.
- 2017 Transexperience and the in-between in the porcelain sculptures of Singing Ho. *The Transnational in Asian Art*, ANU, September 2017.
- 2016 The Commissioning and Representation of Local Labour by Global Contemporary Artists in the Porcelain City of Jingdezhen. AAANZ Annual Conference, ANU, December 2016.

## Engagement

- 2022 Chinese Willow Pattern Dish, *Object Matters* podcast series, Chau Chak Wing Museum, 1 February 2022.
- 2022 Export China: Reimagining Chineseness through the Ceramics Trade in Southeast Asia, *SSEAC Stories* podcast series, Sydney Southeast Asia Centre, 7 January 2022.
- 2021 The power and privilege of blue-and-white in 14<sup>th</sup>-century Vietnam and the Malay peninsula. Public lecture, *Heritage and the Arts* webinar series, Sydney Southeast Asia Centre, September 2021.
- 2021 The Future of Museums. Public panel with Craig Barker, James Flexner, Anna Lawrenson, and Helena Robinson, at the Chau Chak Wing Museum, Sydney, May 2021.
- 2019 Judge for the Art Association of Australia and New Zealand (AAANZ) 'Best Scholar Article in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art' prize
- 2017 Time and the Body: Ah Xian and the Chinese Artisans of Jingdezhen. Public lecture at Hamilton Gallery, Victoria, February 2017.
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## Academic employment

- 2021-present Lecturer in Museum and Heritage Studies, Department of Art History, School of Literature, Arts and Media, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Sydney
- 2016-20 Lecturer in Art History and Curatorship (Sessional/Fixed-Term), Centre for Art History and Art Theory (CAHAT), Research School of Humanities and the Arts/School of Art and Design (SOAD), College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University (ANU).
- 2019-21 Publication Manager, *Art Monthly Australasia*.
- 2018-20 Research Assistant  
'The Wonders that Basham Saw' (Global Research Partnership Scheme), CAHAT and University Archives, ANU  
'Developing guidelines for peer review in the tertiary art and design sector', Australian Council for University Art and Design Schools (ACUADS)