

**CULS5309: Museum and Archives Studies**  
**Department of Cultural and Religious Studies**  
**Chinese University of Hong Kong**  
Dr. Ashley Lee Wong  
Monday 6:45pm-9:30pm, Venue: CKB UG05

**Course Description:**

This course will reflect on museums and archives as social constructs and as methods for artistic intervention. Beginning with the origins of the concept of museums within modernity, the course sets the stage for the role of museums in acquisition of knowledge as a colonial enterprise. Looking at historical forms of collecting, students will learn to critically question what is included and excluded from collections and the role of curator and researcher in interpreting and presenting materials as acts of care. Through the course, we will look at how artists have challenged the construct of museums through institutional critique, New Institutionalism, and decolonisation with aims of better understanding the role of a contemporary museum today. We will discuss museum futures and current developments and thinking of contemporary museums, particularly in contexts outside of Europe. Additionally, we will examine issues of conservation of conceptual and performance art, and engage in discussions around the challenges of moving image and digital preservation. The course will include discussions of selected readings and projects, invited guest speakers and field trips to selected museums and archives in Hong Kong.

**Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs):**

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Critically reflect upon the role of museums and archives historically and within society;
2. Reflect on and develop artistic strategies in relation to archiving through an understanding of critical and alternative archiving practices;
3. Analyse materials and evaluate acquisition strategies and management of museum archives and collections and their political implications;
4. Reflect on how conceptual artworks, time-based media, and moving image works and digital media are preserved and conserved. Reflect on the implications of digital media on collective archiving practices;
5. Develop a perspective on current developments in museum practices and on the future of museums and archives.

**Assessment:**

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Description</b>
Attendance and participation	10%	Attendance and in-class participation (individual) including participating in weekly reading summaries.
Assignment 1	20%	Study journal (individual) - a weekly journal entry of reflections from class and readings as a form of archive.
Assignment 2	30%	Group presentation (group) – a study of an archive or museum collection in Hong Kong.

Assignment 3	40%	2,500-word essay (individual) on a case study or on a topic related to museums and archives.
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### **Course Syllabus and Schedule: (Tentative)**

\* Readings listed below are for reference only. Specific articles and pages for readings will be assigned in class each week. Selected students will be asked to provide summaries, questions and reflections on the readings. The course contents and schedule are provisional and are subject to change according to field trip and guest speaker planning.

#### **Week 1 (8 Jan): Intro to Museums and Archives**

This class will set the stage for understanding museums and archives as set out in this course and introduce elements of the course including the study journal assignment as a form of archive. In the class we will review the ICON Code of Ethics.

ICON Code of Ethics:

<https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICOM-code-En-web.pdf>

#### **Week 2 (15 Jan): From Curiosities to Categorised Knowledge**

This class will discuss the history behind museum collections from Wunderkammers as private collections of curiosities by elite merchants to its evolution in the Enlightenment to acquire and categorise knowledge as part of colonial projects. We will raise questions around how collections are built and the purposes they serve and for who through a discussion of how museums have evolved.

Reading:

Pomian, Krzysztof. *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice 1500-1800*, trans. Elizabeth Wiles-Porter. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

Grinke, Paul. *From Wunderkammer to Museum*. London: Quaritch, 2006.

#### **Week 3 (22 Jan): Decolonisation and Museums**

Black Lives Matters has brought back debates about representation within museum collections and exhibitions by also challenging the collection practices of the past and making efforts to re-write history. This class will look at some efforts of museums to correct the wrongs of the past and discuss whether these strategies are effective and the challenges that are faced.

Reading:

Janes, Robert R., and Richard Sandell, eds. *Museum Activism*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019.

#### **Week 4 (29 Jan): Institutional Critique and New Institutionalism**

This class looks at how artists have questioned the structures of museums through art. We will look at several examples of artists who belong to the movement of institutional critique to understand the issues raised through their artworks, as well as the issues of the eventual "institutionalisation of critique".

Reading:

Cai, Nikita Yingqian, and Biljana Ciric, eds. *Active Withdrawals: Life and Death of Institutional Critique*. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2016.

Kolb, Lucie and Gabriel Flückiger, eds. "New Institutionalism Revisited". *On Curating*, Issue 21, December 2013.

See: <https://www.moma.org/collection/terms/institutional-critique>

### **Week 5 (5 Feb): Alternative Archives: Benjamin's Arcades Project**

This week will look at Walter Benjamin's Arcades Project as an example of an alternative archive documenting urban and social

Reading:

Eiland, Howard and Kevin McLaughlin trans. *Walter Benjamin's The Arcades Project*, Belknap Press, 1999.

Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, MIT Press, 1989.

**-- No Class -- (12 Feb) Chinese New Year**

### **Week 6 (19 Feb): Queer Archives: Queer Reads Library**

In this class, we will discuss zine culture and collective archiving practices of Queer Reads Library, an LGBTQIA+ mobile library based in Hong Kong and Vancouver. The library plays a role in telling the stories and histories of Asian queer communities internationally through zine-making and independent publishing.

Guest speaker (TBC): Beatrix Pang, Queer Reads Library

### **Week 7 (26 Feb): Group Presentations**

### **Week 8 (4 Mar): The Artist's Archive: Ha Bik Chuen Archive**

This class will discuss the Ha Bik Chuen Archive project by Asia Art Archive. It will look at how the artists approached archiving as part of his artistic practice and the efforts by Asia Art Archive to preserve the artist's estate. We will discuss the role that Asia Art Archive plays in documenting and making accessible the multiple recent histories of art in the region.

Ha Bik Chuen Archive, Guest speaker (TBC): Michelle Wong, former researcher at Asia Art Archive, curator of [Portals, Stories, and Other Journeys](#) (2021), Tai Kwun.

### **Week 9 (11 Mar): Moving Image Archives**

This class will look at moving image archives and the practices of preservation of moving image film and video artworks. We will look at aspects of media licensing and censorship reviews for moving image works.

Field trip (TBC): Hong Kong Film Archive or M+ Moving Image Collection

### **Week 10 (18 Mar): Documentation as Art and Digital Preservation**

Documentation serves as a means to preserve ephemeral forms of art including conceptual, performance and digital art. What are the challenges and implications of collecting documentation as art as a strategy for archiving digital practices? What are the different ways of preserving digital media?

Reading:

Dekker, Annet and Gabriella Giannachi, eds. *Documentation as Art Expanded Digital Practices*. Expanded Digital Practices. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2023. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781003130963>.

Guggenheim's The Variable Media Initiative:

<https://www.guggenheim.org/conservation/the-variable-media-initiative>

### **Week 11 (25 Mar): Digitisation and The Archival Turn**

What is the Archival Turn in the context of East Asia? What are the archival strategies specific to the histories and artistic practices of the region? We will look more at the role of Asia Art Archive in Hong Kong and their role and vision for the archive. Additionally, we will look at the implications of digitization on preservation and possibilities around the personal digital archive.

Readings:

Hui, Yuk. "A Contribution to the Political Economy of Personal Archives", in *Compromised Data*, ed. G. Elmer, G. Langlois, J. Redden (Bloomsbury, June 2015), 226-246.

Lei, Yiting, ed. *Archival Turn: East Asian Contemporary Art and Taiwan (1960-1989)*. Taipei: Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2017.

**-- No Class -- (1 Apr) Easter Monday**

### **Week 12 (8 Apr): Museum Futures**

This class will discuss recent thinking on the future of museums today. This will include the artist's role in speculating towards possible museum futures. We will also hear from museum practitioners on their efforts and future directions of their institutions.

Film: *Museum Futures: Distributed*, Marisia Lewandowska and Niel Cummings, 2008

Selected talks from conferences:

ICOM IMREC Seminar on Decolonisation - Panel 1- *Reimagining the museum Reshaping the Collectible: Learning Through Change*, Tate, 2022

**Week 13 (15 Apr): Course review** and individual presentations on essay topics.

Final assignment due two weeks after the last day of class.

### **Recommended Readings:**

Buckley, Brad, and John Conomos eds. *A Companion to Curation*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell, 2020.

Buck-Morss, Susan. *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, MIT Press, 1989.

Cai, Nikita Yingqian, and Biljana CIRIC, eds. *Active Withdrawals: Life and Death of Institutional Critique*. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2016.

Dekker, Annet ed. *Collecting and Conserving Net Art: Moving beyond Conventional Methods*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2018.

Dekker, Annet and Gabriella Giannachi, eds. *Documentation as Art Expanded Digital Practices*. Expanded Digital Practices. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2023. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781003130963>.

Eiland, Howard and Kevin McLaughlin trans. *Walter Benjamin's The Arcades Project*, Belknap Press, 1999.

Grinke, Paul. *From Wunderkammer to Museum*. London: Quaritch, 2006.

Hölling, Hanna B. *Paik's Virtual Archive: Time, Change, and Materiality in Media Art*. University of California Press, 2017.

Hölling, Hanna B. "The Archival Turn: Toward New Ways of Conceptualising Changeable Artworks". In Manovich, L., Smite, R., Smits, R., eds., *Data Drift: Archiving Media And Data Art In The 21st Century*, pp. 73-81. Riga: RIXC and Liepaja's University Art Research Lab.

Hui, Yuk. "Archivist Manifesto." *Mute Magazine*, 2013.

Hui, Yuk. "Archives of the Future - Remarks on the Concept of Tertiary Protention", in *Inscription* (Gutenberg: Landsarkivet i Göteborg, 2018), 129-151.

Hui, Yuk. "A Contribution to the Political Economy of Personal Archives", in *Compromised Data*, ed. G. Elmer, G. Langlois, J. Redden (Bloomsbury, June 2015), 226-246.

Janes, Robert R., and Richard Sandell, eds. *Museum Activism*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019.

Kolb, Lucie and Gabriel Flückiger, eds. "New Institutionalism Revisited". *On Curating*, Issue 21, December 2013.

Lee, Shimrit. *Decolonize Museums (Decolonize That!)*, New York: OR Books, 2022.

Lei, Yiting, ed. *Archival Turn: East Asian Contemporary Art and Taiwan (1960-1989)*. Taipei: Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 2017.

Macdonald, Sharon, ed. *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Chichester, West Sussex, U.K: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

MacGregor, Arthur. *Curiosity and Enlightenment: Collectors and Collections from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

Pomian, Krzysztof. *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice 1500-1800*, trans. Elizabeth Wiles-Porter. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

### **Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:**

Please refer to the University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work at: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>.

With each assignment, you will be required to submit a signed declaration.

- In the case of group projects, all members of the group should sign the declaration.
- For text-based document assignments submit via VeriGuide: [https://veriguide1.cse.cuhk.edu.hk/portal/plagiarism\\_detection/login.jsp](https://veriguide1.cse.cuhk.edu.hk/portal/plagiarism_detection/login.jsp) and submit the receipt the statement, in the form of a copy of the receipt along with your assignment.

The submission of a piece of work, or a part of a piece of work, for more than one purpose (e.g. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration to this effect shall be regarded as having committed undeclared multiple submissions. It is common and acceptable to reuse a turn of phrase or a sentence or two from one's own work; but wholesale reuse is problematic. In any case, agreement from the course teacher(s) concerned should be obtained prior to the submission of the piece of work.

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### **Assessment Criteria:**

**Grade A / A-**: Well-structured essay or presentation with clear framework for discussion. Clear evidence of sophisticated analysis or innovative thinking with depth and complexity of argument beyond course readings and lectures. Evidence of creative thought and articulation of own ideas.

**Grade B+ / B**: Mostly well-structured essay or presentation with a well-developed framework for discussion. Logical development of ideas with some complexity of argument expressed. Some evidence of creative thought and use of own ideas.

**Grade B- / C+:** Essay or presentation has a satisfactory structure with mostly accurate material. Logical presentation attempted and successful in a limited way. Limited evidence of creative thought and use of own ideas.

**Grade D:** Poor and unclear essay or presentation structure. Weak development of argument. Little support from the literature. General appearance of resources lacks clarity.

**Grade F:** No submission or incoherent framework with little relevant material selected and poor use of examples. No development of argument and absence of own ideas.