

## Freud's Chinese Things: Contexts and Interpretations

International online symposium

Sunday, March 6 2022

A half-day online symposium hosted by the Freud Museum London, in association with the exhibition 'Freud and China' (9.2.2022 – 26.6.2022), will examine the Chinese things around Sigmund Freud in his last decade, and situate them in the context of cultures of collecting in his lifetime. The Chinese antiquities in the Freud collection, the 'Chinese' dogs which were his companions, and the wider fascination with Chinese thought and idea in the German-speaking world will be discussed by a range of experts in Chinese art and culture, and its reception in the West.

### *Moving Things*

Stanley Abe, Duke University

This talk will discuss the Chinese religious figures and tomb objects in the collection of Sigmund Freud. Many similar objects were collected in the West from the beginning of the twentieth century. What were such objects in China? How did objects move from temples and tombs into the market for old things? And how did these types of objects find their way to Vienna and London and into Freud's hands?

**Stanley Abe** is Associate Professor in the Department of Art, Art History and Visual Studies, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. He received his Ph.D. in the History of Art from the University of California, Berkeley. His book *Ordinary Images* (2002) was awarded the Shimada Prize for Distinguished Scholarship in the History of East Asian Art in 2004. His new book, *Imagining Sculpture*, from Hirmer Publishers (Munich), is the story of statues and other figural objects in China before they were transformed into the modern idea of Fine Art and Sculpture in the twentieth century.

### *"The vogue of ming ch'i": Collecting Tang Objects in the Inter-war Period*

Stacey Pierson, SOAS

The collection of the Freud Museum includes around ten objects relating to the Tang period in China (618-906). While most are later copies, it can be assumed they were acquired as 'Tang' and were done so in the inter-war period when 'early' Chinese art was increasingly popular with collectors and museums. While today we would not consider such objects early in the Chinese context, in the second quarter of the 20th century, such items (known as *mingqi*), often recently removed from tombs, were considered representative of ancient Chinese artefacts and cultural beliefs surrounding religion and burial. The supply of such objects in the market was made possible by plunder, theft and the trade in tomb goods, facilitated by an unstable political climate in China. This was also a time when tombs and temple sites were being 'uncovered' all over the world, including the 'discovery' of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 and Leonard Woolley's excavations at Ur, which helped to

generate worldwide interest in archaeology. That Freud collected and was gifted 'Tang' figurines reflects both his personal interest in sculpture and archaeology but also the fact that pottery tomb figurines were the most abundant Chinese tomb goods in the art market at that time. In this presentation, Freud's participation in the phenomenon of Tang object collecting in the period 1918-1938 will be explored, with a view to introducing the collectors – private and institutions, the dealers, the exhibitions and publications that helped to spread the taste for such objects and position China in the fashion for archaeological collecting that swept Europe and America before WWII.

**Dr Stacey Pierson** is Reader in the History of Chinese Ceramics at SOAS, University of London. In addition to teaching and supervising research students in the School of Arts, she is President of the Oriental Ceramic Society (London) and series editor for the Routledge series Histories of Material Culture and Collecting, 1550-1950. From 1995 – 2007, she was Curator of the Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, also at the University of London, which housed the world-renowned David collection of Chinese ceramics. She has published widely on aspects of Chinese ceramics and the history of collecting and exhibitions. In 2007 she published *Collectors, Collections and Museums: The Field of Chinese Ceramics in Britain: 1560-1960*, followed by *Chinese Ceramics: a Design History* (2009) and 'The Movement of Chinese Ceramics: Appropriation in Global History', *Journal of World History* 23, no. 1, (2012). In 2013 she published *From Object to Concept: Global Consumption and the Transformation of Ming Porcelain* and her most recent book is *Private Collecting, Exhibitions and the Shaping of Art History in London: the Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1866-1950* (2017) which examines an influential art collecting group in London that played a key role in the intellectual development of Chinese ceramics and other collecting fields through display.

### ***The Interpretation of China – Richard Wilhelm and Carl Gustav Jung*** **Eva Stroeber**

The interpretation of Chinese culture for the German speaking elite in the first half of the 20th century - Freud's time – was dominated by two towering figures: Richard Wilhelm (1873-1930) and Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961). After the disastrous results of World War I, particularly in Germany, and a widespread disappointment with Western rationalism and materialism, East Asia was seen as an alternative, a remedy. China moved into the focus of intellectual discussion. Richard Wilhelm, like James Legge, was a former missionary in China. In his translations of the Chinese Classics, however, he aspired to a timeless truth. For him, Chinese philosophy and spirituality were meant to solve the world's problems. The religious idea of the eternal, of timelessness is particularly obvious in his translation of the *Yijing*, the 'Book of Changes'. Wilhelm shared a sort of spiritual kinship particularly with C. G. Jung, founder of analytical psychology. He claimed that Jung's concept of animus and anima was in

accordance with the views of the oldest Chinese wisdom. Jung wrote a foreword to Wilhelm's translation of the *Yijing*, and developed his concept of synchronicity.

In 1929, Wilhelm, together with Jung, published the translation of a Chinese esoteric-chemist work, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, attributed to Lü Dongbin of the late Tang dynasty,. Wilhelm, Jung and his German allies formulated the mystic idealizations of the "Wisdom of the East" found in the seemingly mystic and irrational elements of Chinese culture, philosophy and religions a metaphysical alternative to Western rationalism as a remedy and salvation for the West

**Dr. Eva Stroeber** read Chinese Studies, East Asian art history, philosophy and comparative religion in Germany and Taiwan, and holds a PhD on Chinese Buddhism. She has worked as curator for East Asian porcelain at the Porcelain Collection, Dresden, and the Museum Princessehof, Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. Her range of publications include the catalogue *Quellen. Das Wasser in der Kunst Ostasiens* (1992); *"La Maladie der porcelain..." East Asian Porcelain from the Collection of Augustus the Strong* (2001); *Ostasiatika. Sammlungskataloge des Herzog Anton Ulrich Museums Braunschweig* (2002); *10,000 Times Happiness. Symbols on Chinese Porcelain* (2011), and *MING. Porcelain for a Globalised Trade* (2013). She is now working on "transcultural" objects, things made in China for export, which, after crossing cultural borders, were used and interpreted in different ways. The focus of her present research is on Asian storage jars, a carved hornbill casque – and cats in Asian art.

### ***Chowing down: the Freud family and their Chinese dogs***

**Sarah Cheang, Royal College of Art**

There are many photographs of Sigmund and Anna Freud with their chows. These densely furred dogs of Chinese origin were a favourite of the Freuds, who owned several at a time, and also had many chows in succession. Pedigree dogs are often closely connected to particular places and nationalities, and Chinese dogs are no exception. So why did the Freuds love their chows so much? One look at these cuddly teddy bear-faced animals may seem to suggest an answer, but this paper explores more widely how the chow, as a sentient Chinese collectable, found its place beside Freud's couch.

**Dr Sarah Cheang** is Head of Programme for History of Design at the Royal College of Art, London. Her research centres on the global circulation of East Asian fashion and material culture, from the nineteenth century to the present day. She has a special research interest in the presence of Chinese things in British culture, on which she has published widely. Alongside collections of Chinese ceramics, garments, embroideries, wallpapers and carpets, this has led her to delve into the histories of Chinese hairstyles, pianos, and even the Pekingese dog.

***Where is Miss Han? Mistakes and Misunderstandings in Sigmund Freud's Chinese Collection***  
**Craig Clunas, University of Oxford**

The Chinese objects in Sigmund Freud's collection, and the literature which surrounds them, are a rich source of mistakes and misunderstandings, which range from Freud's own misdatings of objects, and his frequent purchase of fake antiquities, to the factual slips and misreadings of context by later curators, including the speaker himself. This talk will reflect on some of the experiences of 'getting it wrong' in working with Freud's Chinese things, and what that might mean for our understanding of the place of these things in Freud's work today.

**Craig Clunas** is Professor Emeritus of the History of Art, University of Oxford, and curator of the exhibition 'Sigmund Freud and China'. He has worked as a curator of Chinese collections at the V&A Museum, London, and has taught art history at Sussex University, SOAS, and University of Oxford, with visiting appointments at the universities of Chicago and Zurich. He has published extensively on Chinese art and culture, including *Art in China* (1997) and *Chinese Painting and its Audiences* (2017), based on the Mellon Lectures given at the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC in 2012. Many of his works have been translated into Chinese. His next book will be *The Echo Chamber: Transnational Chinese Painting, 1897-1935*, to be published in English and Chinese by OCAT Institute, Beijing in autumn 2022.