

Subject: EM: March 10: Patricia Yu (Scripps Art History Candidate Job Talk)
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Scripps College
East Asian
Art History
Candidate
Job Talk



PATRICIA YU
Fragmented Bodies: The Afterlives of the
Yuanming Yuan Zodiac Heads and the
Negotiation of Cultural Heritage

Monday, March 10
4:45 PM
Steele Hall 101
Scripps College

Image: Ai Weiwei, *Circle of*
Animals/Zodiac Heads, 2010.
LACMA, Gift of the Yuz Foundation.
Photo: Patricia Yu

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Patricia Yu / Monday, March 10 / 4:45pm / Steele Hall 101 / Scripps College

Fragmented Bodies: The Afterlives of the Yuanming Yuan Zodiac Heads and the
Negotiation of Cultural Heritage

This talk addresses the bronze zodiac head sculptures from the Yuanming Yuan (Garden of Perfect Brightness), which was looted and burned during the Second Opium War in 1860. Yu asks why these particular objects have gained iconic status in repatriation debates of looted artworks from China, and argues that they derive their rhetorical power from their form as fragmented bodies, particularly as decapitated heads. Yu then turns to the zodiac heads' afterlives as sculptural reproductions, where contemporary artists like Ai Weiwei have given the heads new physical form and revived them for new audiences. Since these reproductions are not exact copies, Yu's project argues that these acts of artistic reproduction should be considered acts of translation that move the conversation about cultural heritage into site-specific contexts and give voice to questions about heritage, identity, traditions, and even global justice. These acts of artistic "translation" can elevate the originals, satirize them, or even inspire acts of vandalism.

Patricia J. Yu is assistant professor of art history at Kenyon College, where she teaches the arts of Asia, art in cross-cultural translation, the themed landscape, and issues of cultural heritage. Her book project, "*Yuanming Yuan Redux: The Replicated Afterlives of a Garden in Fragments*," addresses the afterlives of the Qing dynasty Garden of Perfect Brightness beyond its original site in Beijing. She was a pre-doctoral fellow with the Getty Research Institute, a curatorial fellow at the Peabody Essex Museum, and graduate intern with Getty Research Institute Publications. She earned a PhD in art history from the University of California, Berkeley. She was a history major at Pomona College, and the data collections specialist at the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery at Scripps College. She is currently the Mellon Fellow at the Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens.