Dear colleagues and friends,

The evaluation of the Excellence Initiative and pending decisions of its continuation have had an impact on the Cluster/HCTS during the past half year and will continue to do so. We have already started to get prepared for a tough competition we are expecting for the upcoming call for applications.

In light of this great challenge ahead of us I am delighted to relate a number of success stories by scholars of our community: Axel Michaels received the Lautenschläger Research Prize, Sumathi Ramaswamy was honoured with the Anneliese Maier Research Award, and the Université Libre de Bruxelles awarded Kerstin von Lingen with its Annual Lecture Prize.

The research projects on “Hachiman Handscrolls” and “Elderscapes” have launched interactive websites, others have presented their results in various publications. Yet again we have witnessed a wide variety of conferences and workshops, among them a symposium in honour of our dear colleague Monica Juneja on “Writing Global (Art) History”. This year’s Annual Conference “Making, Sustaining, Breaking – The Politics of Heritage and Culture” in October is already in preparation as a joint endeavour by the Cluster, the Forum Transregionale Studien and the Max Weber Foundation.

This newsletter will provide you with detailed information on further activities, publications, events and many more. I hope you enjoy the read and look forward to a semester full of inspiring research activities and events!

Best regards,

Prof. Dr. Joseph Maran
Acting Director

Oliver Lamers
Scientific Project Manager
This year’s Annual Conference will take place from October 12-14 in Heidelberg. The topic of the conference is “Making, Sustaining, Breaking – The Politics of Heritage and Culture”. It will address some of the urgent questions that surround heritage as a political and cultural issue at a historical juncture when the idea of culture is being drawn into a field of intense contestation. The conference will include two keynote addresses, given by the renowned historian of images and iconoclasm, David Freedberg (London), and the Iraqi novelist and poet, Sinan Antoon (New York/Berlin). The conference is organised by Prof. Monica Juneja, PD Dr. Michael Falser and PD Dr. Philipp Stockhammer on behalf of Research Area D “Historicities & Heritage”. It is a collaborative enterprise of the Cluster “Asia and Europe”, the Forum Transregionale Studien, the Max Weber Stiftung - Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland, and the German Archaeological Institute in Berlin.

Launch of Digital Art History Website

The Hachiman Digital Handscrolls Project has launched a new website in November, comprising seven digitized Japanese handscrolls from the 14th to the 19th centuries. The website enhances digital presentations of image-text formats which enable users to experience Japanese handscrolls as if they were viewing them in reality. The project led by Prof. Melanie Trede and Eric Decker is a collaboration of the Heidelberg Research Architecture, the Institute of East Asian Art History and the software developer bitGilde.

www.hachiman.uni-hd.de

Launch of Website and Project “Elderscapes”

The transmedia project “Elderscapes. Ageing in Urban South Asia” has launched and presented its website in January at the Karl Jaspers Centre. “Elderscapes” is an interactive website which combines multiple forms of media, such as images, films, sounds and texts. Older people show their city and their activities from their own view and reflect on the changes they have witnessed. The project has been developed by Annika Mayer and Roberta Mandoki, both members of project B19, and filmmaker Jakob Gross for the Chair of Visual and Media Anthropology, held by Prof. Christiane Brosius.

www.uni-heidelberg.de/elderscapes

Lectures at the HCTS

During the winter term 2015/16 a number of events were hosted by the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies (HCTS). A HCTS Lecture was given by Prof. Simon Partner (Duke University). He spoke on “Media, Visual Culture, Performance: Contesting and Creating “Japan” in 1860’s Yokohama”. Furthermore, HCTS fellow Prof. Jens Halfwassen gave a lecture on “Why is Negative Theology Attractive for Monotheism?”.

Digital Humanities Tool

The “VRA Core 4 XML Transform Tool”, developed by the Heidelberg Research Architecture, was introduced by Matthias Arnold at the 3rd ARLIS/NA + VRA Joint Conference on visual arts/visual resources in March. It was presented at a well-attended workshop and on a poster, which received the first prize in the category “Most inspiring”. The new tool supports research work with descriptive images and metadata by transforming flat data into structured schema-controlled XML or even RDF.

DFG Funding

Prof. Michael Bergunder and Dr. Julian Strube, project MC7.1 “Religion and Politics”, have been successful with an application to the German Research Foundation (DFG). Starting in 2016, they will conduct research within the new project “Tantra and the global religious history of the 19th and 20th century”.

Newsletter Spring 2016
Axel Michaels received Lautenschlaeger Research Prize

Axel Michaels, Co-Director of the Cluster “Asia and Europe”, received the Lautenschläger Research Prize 2015 endowed with 250,000€. He was honoured as an internationally recognised research personality with outstanding achievements in research. In his work on the cultural and religious history of South Asia, Axel Michaels combines text studies and ethnographic research in a unique way, and thus established a new area of research known as “Ethno-Indology”. His research focuses on the practice and history of Hinduism in India and the religions of Nepal, in particular rituals and festivals. Michaels is professor of Classical Indology at the South Asia Institute, where he heads the Department of Cultural and Religious History of South Asia. The ceremony for the most highly endowed research prize from a private sponsor in Germany was held in December 2015 in Heidelberg.

Humboldt Foundation awards Sumathi Ramaswamy

Prof. Sumathi Ramaswamy (Duke University) received the prestigious Anneliese Maier Research Award by the Humboldt Foundation. With the prize money of 250,000€, she will pursue research at her host institution, the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies (HCTS), over the course of five years. She has been invited by Prof. Christiane Brosius and will collaborate with her as well as with Prof. Barbara Mittler and Prof. Monica Juneja. Among others, they will work together in the digital humanities project “No Parallels: the Fatherly Bodies of Gandhi and Mao”. Ramaswamy is member of the Cluster’s Advisory Board.

University of Bruxelles awards Kerstin von Lingen

Dr. Kerstin von Lingen was awarded the 2016 edition of the International Chair of the History of the Second World War, an annual lecture prize by the Université Libre de Bruxelles. During March, the head of Junior Research Group “Transcultural Justice” was visiting fellow in Bruxelles, Belgium. At the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Nuremberg trial, the 2016 edition of the Chair revisited the issues of postwar trials and international justice in their widest chronological and geographical context. The chairholder Kerstin von Lingen is simultaneously awarded with the Baron Velge Prize.

AWARDS&APPOINTMENTS

Prof. Christiane Brosius, Chair of Visual and Media Anthropology, has been appointed as a fellow of the Marsilius Kolleg at Heidelberg University in 2016-2017.

Prof. Harald Fuess, Chair of Cultural Economic History, has been appointed to the International Advisory Board of Tohoku University in Sendai, Japan. In addition, he has been invited as a Visiting Faculty Fellow for Tohoku’s “The 21st Century Hasekura Project in Japanese Studies”.

Dr. Lion König, Associate Member of the Cluster “Asia and Europe”, has been awarded a fellowship by the German Research Foundation to carry out postdoctoral research at the Asian Studies Center, Oxford University.

Prof. Axel Michaels received the Höffmann Academic Award for Intercultural Competence 2015 conferred by the University of Vechta.

PhD Student Julia Poerting received a DAAD travel grant to attend the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association 2015. Furthermore, she received a grant from the Aarhus University Research Foundation to be visiting student in Aarhus in 2016.

PhD student Swetlana Torno has been elected as a member of the executive committee of the Doctoral Student Convention at Heidelberg University. She will represent the doctoral students in the social sciences for one year.
Book on Hindu Rituals and Festivals

Prof. Axel Michaels published a book with the title “Homo Ritualis. Hindu Ritual and Its Significance for Ritual Theory”. This first book to present a Hindu theory of rituals was published by Oxford University Press in 2015. It analyses ritual through cultural-specific and religious contexts, taking into account how indigenous terms and theories affect and contribute to current ritual theory. Drawing on extensive textual studies and fieldwork in Nepal and India, the book examines the characteristic structure of Hindu rituals.

Books on Ritual Healing and Pilgrimage

Two books by Prof. William Sax were published by Oxford University Press. “The Law of Possession: Ritual, Healing, and the Secular State” was edited by Prof. Sax together with Prof. Helene Basu (Münster University). This volume brings together historical and contemporary case studies from East Asia, South Asia, and Africa. Furthermore, a Hindi translation “Himalaya ki Nandadevi” of Sax’ 1991 book “Mountain Goddess: Gender and Politics in a Himalayan Pilgrimage” was released.

Book on the Anthropology of Suicide

Dr. Daniel Münster and Ludek Broz (Czech Academy of Sciences) edited a volume on the topic of self-harm, suicide, and agency. Under the title “Suicide and Agency: Anthropological Perspectives on Self-Destruction, Personhood, and Power”, it was published by Ashgate in 2015. The authors explore how the interplay of self-harm, suicide, personhood and agency varies markedly across site (Greenland, Siberia, India, Palestine, Mexico) and setting (e.g. self-run leprosy colony, suicide bomb attack, cash-crop farming).

Book on Arabic-Islamic Perceptions

Arabic-Islamic perceptions of Western Europe is the topic of a book by Prof. Daniel König: “Arabic-Islamic Views of the Latin West. Tracing the Emergence of Medieval Europe” was published by Oxford University Press in 2015. The publication examines how the Arabic-Islamic world perceived medieval Western Europe in an age that is usually associated with the rise and expansion of Islam, the Spanish Reconquista, and the Crusades. It focuses on transmission and reception, characterizing the flow of information between both cultural spheres.

NEW E-JOURNAL ISSUE

A new issue of the E-Journal “Transcultural Studies” is available online. It features two articles on circulations of concepts and religions and two articles on the theme “Artistic Knowledge Production”. The four studies are diverse in terms of disciplinary background and regional focus. All highlight the complex ways in which individual and collective agency is distributed in the contested creation of inescapably entangled worlds.

Articles

“Republic of Letters Comes to Nagasaki: Record of a Translator’s Struggle” by David Mervart

“Repercussions from the Far East: A Comparison of the Catholic and Nestorian Presence in China” by Thomas Ertl

Themed Section

“Re-thinking Artistic Knowledge Production: Global Media Cultures – Distributed Creativity.” An Introduction by Franziska Koch

“The People’s Choice: Transcultural Collectivity and the Art of Shared Knowledge Production” by Samantha Schramm

“Indigenous Knowledge in the Production of Post-Frontier American Culture” by Cora Bender

Transcultural Studies is edited by Profs. Monica Juneja, Joachim Kurtz, Rudolf G. Wagner, and Dr. Andrea Hacker. It is accessible at www.transculturalstudies.org
Book on Embryological Discourse in East Asian Religions

Dr. Anna Andreeva and Dr. Dominic Steavu (University of California, Santa Barbara) edited the book “Transforming the Void. Embryological Discourse and Reproductive Imagery in East Asian Religions”. It marks the outcome of project C11 “Medicine and Religion” and was published by Brill in 2015. The volume considers paths to self-cultivation and salvation that are patterned on human embryological development or procreative imagery in the religions of China and Japan. It focuses on Taoism, Esoteric Buddhism, Shinto, and Shugendō.

Book on the Post-Imperial Russian–Qing Borderland

Ivan Sablin published the book “Governing Post-Imperial Siberia and Mongolia, 1911-1924: Buddhism, Socialism, and Nationalism in State and Autonomy Building”. The publication is based on his dissertation, which he completed in the Cluster’s Graduate Programme for Transcultural Studies, and was published by Routledge in 2015. Sablin demonstrates that indigenous actors of the former Russian–Qing imperial borderland played a crucial role in the development and implementation of the global Soviet project.

Book on Politics of the Other in India and China

Dr. Lion Koenig and Dr. Bidisha Chaudhuri edited the book “Politics of the Other in India and China: Western Concepts in Non-Western Contexts”. It was published by Routledge in 2016. The book proposes to shift the discussion on what constitutes the ‘Other’ as opposed to the ‘Self’ from philosophy and cultural studies to the social sciences. Drawing on multiple disciplines, concepts and contexts in India and China, the book contributes to the theory and practice of politics, as well as to International and Asian Studies.

Julian Strube edited Special Issue of Aries

Dr. Julian Strube, postdoctoral fellow of project MC7.1 “Religion and Politics”, has edited a special issue of “Aries - Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism” on the topic “Transgressing Boundaries”. It was published by Brill in 2016. The issue features an introduction by Dr. Strube on “Transgressing Boundaries. Social Reform, Theology, and the Demarcations Between Science and Religion”. This editorial argues for a methodological move away from dichotomous constellations toward a concept of entangled history. Further articles include a contribution by Prof. Michael Bergunder (project MC7 “Political Legitimation”) with the title “‘Religion’ and ‘Science’ Within a Global Religious History”.

ONLINE PUBLICATIONS

PD Dr. Philipp W. Stockhammer, Prof. Johannes Krause (Jena) and their research group published a paper about their latest findings, which proof a re-writing of the Early Bronze Age chronology. The paper “Rewriting the Central European Early Bronze Age Chronology” was published by the renowned journal PLOS ONE in 2015.

“Trafo - Blog for Transregional Research” published an interview with Prof. Barbara Mittler in the series “All Things Transregional”. Prof. Mittler explains the importance of “trans-” studies and distinguishes “trans-”cultural from “trans-” regional perspectives. Furthermore, interviews with former Cluster Directors Prof. Madeleine Herren-Oesch and Prof. Thomas Maissen were published in this series. “Trafo” is hosted by Forum Transregionale Studien, a partner institution of the Cluster/HCTS.

Dr. Sophie Roche published an article online at the weblog “Allegra Lab: Anthropology, Law, Art & World”. Under the title “Malthus and the #EXPO2015”, she analyses the EXPO Milano 2015 “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life” by linking it to the ideas of Thomas Malthus, an economic demographer of the 18th century.

More publications: www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/publications
Closing Ceremony of the Master and Graduate Programmes

The closing ceremony of the Master and Graduate Programmes in Transcultural Studies (MATS and GPTS) 2015 took place in December at the Karl Jaspers Centre. Students of both programmes reviewed their studies at the Cluster and received their graduation certificates. The ceremony started with welcoming remarks by Cluster Director Prof. Joseph Maran, who congratulated the students on their hard work and achievements. After an introduction by Jule Nowoitnick, Graduate and Master Programme Manager, Prof. Christiane Brosius and student representatives looked back on the past years, remembering the students’ excellent studies and research. Finally, the MA students received their certificates from Prof. Joachim Kurtz and the doctoral students were awarded with their certificates by Prof. Maran.

International SEECHAC Colloquium in Heidelberg

The international SEECHAC (European Society for Studies of Central Asia and Himalayan Regions) colloquium took place in November in Heidelberg under the title “Religious Revivals and Artistic Renaissance in Central Asia and the Himalayan Region – Past and Present”. It focused on the various forms of religious revivals or artistic renaissances in the Himalayas and Central Asia from the viewpoint of a variety of disciplines and fields of study, such as archaeology, art history, numismatics, social anthropology and religious studies. The conference was jointly organised by SEECHAC and the Cluster “Asia and Europe”. The Heidelberg organising committee was headed by Prof. Birgit Kellner, former Chair of Buddhist Studies.

Heidelberg Centre South Asia organised Event Series

The Heidelberg Centre South Asia (HCSA), which among others functions as the Cluster’s branch office in India, organised a series of events in collaboration with the German House for Research and Innovation (DWIH). Two conferences focusing on environmental changes in Europe and India and two events addressing scientific discourses on research and education in Germany and India were held during the winter term. One highlight was the accompanying exhibition on “Environmental Change on a Himalayan scale” with photographs by Prof. Marcus Nüsser (MC9 “Waterscapes”).

SELECTED EVENTS

History of Psychiatry

“Psychiatry in Europe after World War II” was the title of an international conference held in October. It was organised by Dr. Maike Rotzoll and Dr. Frank Grüner, both project MC 11.2 “Melancholy”, and Prof. Wolfgang U. Eckart from the Institute of History and Ethics of Medicine.

Transnational Histories

The 70th anniversary of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East at Tokyo (1946-1948) was the topic of the workshop “Law, Biography, and a Trial: Tokyo's Transnational Histories”. It was organised by Junior Research Group “Transcultural Justice”, headed by Dr. Kerstin von Lingen, in December.

Migration and Arts

The workshop “Border Crossings: Migration Arts and Arts of Migration” took place in January. It was organised by Prof. Christiane Brosius and Cathrine Bublatzky, both Chair of Visual and Media Anthropology, and Net1 “Arts and the Transcultural”.

Modernity in China

“Modernity and Urbanity in Europe and China” was the title of a workshop in February. It was held on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Heidelberg University’s partnership with Nankai University, China, and was co-organised by Prof. Barbara Mittler.
Symposium in Honour of Monica Juneja

The symposium “The Pleasure of Challenging Representation – Writing Global (Art) History” was held in February on the occasion of the 60th birthday of Prof. Monica Juneja, Chair of Global Art History. It took stock of current research approaches in the related fields of global (art) history focusing on comparative and cross-disciplinary perspectives. A number of prominent scholars were invited to critically revisit the local and global reception as well as the methodological relevance of its transcultural research agenda. They dialogically explored the “pleasure of challenging representation” in its double sense: the (art) historian’s methodological task to challenge representation – be it textual or visual – and the additional demands that result from representations of artifacts, concepts, and cultural practices. The event was coordinated by Franziska Koch and Jennifer Pochodzalla and supported by the Cluster “Asia and Europe” and the Institute for European Art History.

Conference on Regionalist Art Forms

The international conference “The Picturesque Eye. Framing Regionalist Art Forms in Late Empires (1900-1950)” took place in December in Vienna. It was conceptualized and co-organised by PD Dr. Michael Falser, project D18 “Picturesque Modernities” and Global Art History.

Conference and Network on Transcultural Artistic Practices

“Present’s disjunctive unity. Constructing and deconstructing histories of contemporary cultural and aesthetic practices” was the title of a conference held in November in Berlin. It served to launch the “Research Network for Critical Transcultural Perspectives on Artistic and Visual Practices”. The event was co-organised by Franziska Koch, Global Art History.

Symposium on the Histories of Japanese Art


SELECTED EVENTS

Kyoto-Heidelberg Workshops

Two Kyoto-Heidelberg Student Workshops were held during winter term. They addressed the topics sustainability, development and migration between Asia and Europe. The workshops were part of the continuing partnership between Heidelberg and Kyoto and organised by Dr. Steven Ivings and Björn-Ole Kamm.

Urban Religion

The symposium “Religion in Urban Contexts” took place at Utrecht University in April. It was organised by Junior Research Group “Pentecostalism” with the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Utrecht University.

Literary Memory

“Forging Literary Memory in Taiwan: The Commemoration of Writers in Museum Space” was the title of a workshop held in December at the Karl Jaspers Centre and the Institute of Chinese Studies. It was organised by graduate student Emily Mae Graf. A film about the event is available on the conference homepage.

Photo Festival in Nepal

The SAI HelpNepal project “Patis in Patan” by Prof. Christiane Brosius, Sujan Chitrakar and Rajendra Shakya contributed to the first photography festival in Nepal, “Photo Kathmandu”, in November. The festival was widely attributed to vernacular heritage sites in the historic city of Patan.