

# SINOPTICON

{ contemporary chinoiserie in contemporary art }



## The Project

Through form and decorative narrative in chinoiserie we can discuss value and taste, fantasy, replication and stereotyping of images. So too, the darker elements of chinoiserie's historical routes; identity politics, racism, trade and production values, authorship and the contested territory of exoticism. This project looks to unpick these themes through contemporary art, to shed light on how pervasive Chinese culture, industry and aesthetics are in our everyday lives.

Sinopticon works as a long term project founded by artists Gayle Chong Kwan and Stephanie Douet and curator Eliza Gluckman. Today the project is curated, researched and continually developed by Eliza Gluckman and Lucy Day ([Day&Gluckman](#)), a curatorial partnership in collaboration with partners. We look to commission new works, curate exhibitions, respond to the historical and create new dialogues. The blog is run by one of the founding artists, Stephanie Douet.

## Couriers of Taste

Following the success of the exhibition, [SINOPTICON {Plymouth}](#), we developed an exhibition for [Danson House](#) (Bexley Heritage Trust) in Kent responding to strands of the SINOPTICON project; namely taste, collecting and trade. The house was built on money from sugar plantations as a status symbol and homage to pleasure. The exhibition included works commissioned for SINOPTICON, such as Laura Whites phenomenal 24 plinthead sculptures as well as new commissions and artists: April-October 2013. [See the Exhibition page](#)

## News

If you are not aware of the brilliant work of Emil de Bruijn, an NT expert on chinoiserie and author of a new book on Chinese wallpapers, then do check out his blog. He's the man for the history... [here](#)

## *Did you pocket the sun(flower seed)?*



*To celebrate Chinese New Year and herald **Couriers of Taste** opening at Danson House, Bexley Heritage Trust and Day + Gluckman launched a successful appeal to anyone with ceramic sunflower seeds from Ai WeiWei's eponymous 2010 Tate Modern installation to lend them for part of the exhibition – we attracted a lot of seeds all with their own stories... and quite a bit of press.*

## Project Timeline

**2014** SINOPTICON is in an exciting development phase – we are in discussions for new manifestations in London and abroad...

**April-October, 2013** – Couriers of Taste opens at Danson House

**February 2013** – [Ai WeiWei sunflower seed appeal launched](#)

**2013** – *Couriers of Taste* at Danson House, Bexleyheath, Kent: April – October 2013

**2012** – [SINOPTICON {Plymouth}](#) - a multi-venue exhibition at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, Plymouth College of Art, Plymouth Arts Centre and National Trust's Saltram House: 28 April to 7 July 2012

Suki Chan – Gayle Chong Kwan – Stephanie Douet – Christian Jankowski, Isaac Julien – WESSIELING – Grayson Perry – Ed Pien – Meekyoung Shin, Karen Tam – Erika Tan – Tsang KinWah – Laura White – [READ MORE](#)

**2011** - Commissioning – new

[Read more](#) Seed Appeal

works by Gayle Chong Kwan, Stephanie Douet, Tsang KinWah, WESSIELING, Ed Pien, Karen Tam, Erika Tan and Laura White

**September-November 2011**

– [OCAT Residency, Shenzhen, China](#) – Paula Orrell, curator  
Plymouth Arts Centre

**January 2011** – Eliza curated the **[Friday Late at the V&A](#)**.

See the images on [V&A Friday Late Flickr page](#)

**January/February 2011** –

Residency/Workshop at the Chinese Arts Centre: Gayle Chong Kwan and Stephanie Douet

**October 2010** – Sinopticon events launched with a

**[symposium at London's V&A Museum](#)**, asking what contemporary chinoiserie means in contemporary art.

**You can download the OVERVIEW of the Symposium – please see the [Symposium page](#)**



## SYMPOSIUM at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London October 12, 2010

The symposium reflects on and investigates the idea of contemporary chinoiserie, by giving a modern context to the themes, issues and ideas surrounding historical chinoiserie: politics & trade, authorship, interpretation & cultural misunderstanding, fantasy, escapism and fiction and frippery & design. The symposium marks the beginning of a period of commissioning new art works for a touring exhibition across the UK in 2012/13, and the launch of the project website ([www.sinopticon.org](http://www.sinopticon.org)).

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Morning chair: **Dr. Sarah Cheang**

Department of Cultural and Historical Studies, London College of Fashion

10am – **Eliza Gluckman**, curator and co-founder of Sinopticon:

‘Introduction to Sinopticon: contemporary chinoiserie in contemporary art’

10.10am – **Ben Schmidt**, University of Washington:

‘Exoticism and Chinoiserie circa 1700: The Medium and the Message’

10.30am – **Glenn Adamson**, V&A Deputy Head Research and Head of Graduate Studies:

‘A Way of Seeing: The Optic of Chinoiserie’

10.50am – **Q&A** chaired by Dr. Sarah Cheang

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11am – coffee break, refreshments provided

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11.30am – **Gayle Chong Kwan**, artist and co-founder of Sinopticon

11.50am – **Erika Tan**, artist

12.10pm – **Q&A** chaired by Dr. Sarah Cheang

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12.30pm – break for lunch

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Afternoon chair: **Glenn Adamson**

V&A Deputy Head Research and Head of Graduate Studies

2pm – KEYNOTE – **Philip Tinari**, writer and curator: ‘How artists both Chinese and foreign have employed strategies of chinoiserie’

2.40pm – **Q&A** chaired by Glenn Adamson

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3pm – coffee break, refreshments provided

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3.30pm – **Ed Pien**, artist

3.50pm – **Wu Chi-Tsung**, artist

4.10pm – **Q&A** with Ying Kwok, curator, Chinese Arts Centre (Manchester, UK)

4.30pm – RESPONDENT – **Dr. Sarah Teasley**

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Location: The event will be held in Seminar Room A, in the Research Department of the V&A. The seminar room is located at the top of the ceramic staircase, which can be accessed from the west end of the main public cafe of the museum. **RSVP & contact:** Eliza Gluckman, 07776 214 921/ [elizagluckman@hotmail.com](mailto:elizagluckman@hotmail.com)

# SINOPTICON

{ contemporary chinoiserie in contemporary art }

SINOPTICON - Symposium – V&A , 12 October 2010

## Overview

Thank you to all of you who attended the symposium – we had an impressive range of experts including academics, artists, curators, writers and policy makers, some of whom had travelled across the world to be with us. There was a huge amount to cover, and the day really shouldered the complexities of the term chinoiserie and what it might mean in a contemporary context. It also opened new avenues of exploration and discussion that could, and perhaps will, become entirely new areas of development – strategies of chinoiserie in response to the arrival of Chinese contemporary art on the global stage, and nuances of femininity and feminism in chinoiserie historically and today – are just two that jump to mind.

My introduction aimed to plant us in the realm of contemporary art practice by showing some images of art works that deal with areas that might be potent in a discussion of a contemporary chinoiserie. These encompass materials - such as ceramics - used as historical material and vessels for decorative narratives (Lisa Cheung/ Grayson Perry/ Paul Scott); furniture/object/ sculpture (Stephanie Douet) leading to observations about display, value and taste (Laura White) and trade, manufacturing and economic relationships; the exploration of the trade of fantasy, fiction and narrative (Fiona Tan/ Ed Pien); the decorative appropriation of 'chinoiserie style' elements from Rococo design and the fantastical etchings of Victorien Sardou's characterisation of 'orientals'. Here we enter the territory of cultural identity, racism and misappropriation (Karen Tam/ Erika Tan). Authorship and production seep in to all these works either implicitly or explicitly (Christian Jankowski/ Huang Yong Ping).

One artist we could not ignore was Ai Weiwei, with the timely opening of his Unilever Commission at the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall the evening before. The mode of production, his choice of material, the cultural significance and visual nuances of the sunflower seeds all bled in to the discussion on nearly every level. A feast of discussion is now extended or truncated by the UK's fetish for Health and Safety.

**Ben Schmidt** took us through a few visual journeys, which illustrated the appropriation and reappropriation of visual material in historical objects of chinoiserie – ceramics, fabrics and furniture. One such journey led us from a decorative image of a figure in a 'Chinese' landscape which found its visual route, via other objects, from an earlier print of a branded slave of African origin. This bastardisation and casual use of visual sources is still very evident in the media today.

**Glenn Adamson** will be sharing his paper with us, so look out for its arrival on the website... Glenn looked at the optics of chinoiserie, taking historical examples to explore the ways we look at China through chinoiserie. It is not simply a mirror or projection of our fantasies but by including an element of distance – of seeing, but not seeing inside – the optic of chinoiserie shuts us out. He also brought us right up to date, looking at the ethics of production of some contemporary ceramicists.

**Gayle Chong Kwan & Erika Tan** both covered different areas of what chinoiserie might mean in their practice. Gayle explained her research so far, and the beginning of her journey looking at Chinese presence in Africa. Erika gave a sharp reminder of the powerful cultural shaping of funding and museum programming when looking at China; how the political and economic relationship of countries shapes our relationship with them and cultural production.

**Dr. Sarah Cheang** chaired the morning session brilliantly – it was only a shame not to tap in to her vast knowledge and research of C20<sup>th</sup> chinoiserie and how she felt it interplayed with the day's themes.

**Phil Tinari**, our excellent keynote, threw everything up in the air and gave us a great journey through strategies of chinoiserie identified through certain artists and art works. Being Beijing-based and well versed in the contemporary art scene, he led us through the conversations between Chinese artists on the topic of producing works that might be appetizing to the 'global' art scene – spring roll anyone? Phil will be writing up his paper for publication on the site and I'll let you know as soon as it's up.

**Ed Pien** opened up the discussion in many ways – he will certainly be contributing more to Sinopticon so I'll keep you posted but one element he discussed around how we view chinoiserie was the concept that "things are strange if I think they are strange". More from him soon.

**Wu Chi-Tsung** showed a selection of his works, which he discussed eloquently. In many ways – just watching his slow-paced projected installations he brought the discussion back to the desire to make art works and the artist's personal journeys in production. His works have elements that are Chinese – visually and theoretically – but this comes very much from his own training as an artist. **Ying Kwok** kindly mediated the questions to Ed and Chi-Tsung.

Amazingly **Dr. Sarah Teasley** pulled together the day for us all so I'll leave you with her insightful breakdown of **key themes** those raised and those that might be explored.

Some **key themes** that our speakers have raised today:

1. Agency - who is acting, where?
2. The politics of production and consumption - and of funding, and promotion -

exploitation across national boundaries, class boundaries, roles and relative economic strengths within production system - including the complexities provoked by artists who seek to draw attention to this – Ai Weiwei's sunflower seeds, Christian Jankowski's project in Dafen, Cai Guo-Qiang's peasant inventors, which we might compare - to which I'd extend our attention to the ethical questions

3. Transmediation - traveling images morphing in all but bare bones of recognizable form
4. Chinoiserie as an optic
5. But also the other senses engaged - can we grasp –and possibly turn to our own ends - Chinoiserie as a polysensory frame?
6. What does it mean to articulate national discourse in one's art - whether 'of one's nation' or 'as diaspora artist' - or to be asked/expected to do so?
7. Can 'nation' work, when 'China' occupies so many geographical and political spaces - the PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, diaspora, ...
8. The usefulness of looking at analogies, e.g. Japan in the post-WW2 period.
9. And the embrace of ambiguity in work which, for a variety of reasons, has a relation to China, Chineseness, Chinese artistic practices or chinoiserie. - combined with Ed's suggestion that chinoiserie might fix things in an unreality

Some possibly **important themes that may not have been raised**, but that we might want to consider:

1. Chinoiserie and consumption of Chinese art today in other circuits, particularly regional ones – Gayle raised the issue of China in Africa, as one that we might consider further. But also contemporary Chinese art in Japan and Korea in the 2000s–Biennales in Gwangjeou, media art in Seoul, the impact of Fukuoka's promotion of Asian art generally, and also Chinese awareness of actions in other parts of Asia, e.g. interest in Japanese contemporary artists' crossovers into high-end brand work, pop culture critique such as Murakami.
2. Also, thinking historically, and with reference only to the geography that I know best (as we've seen in Ben's presentation, Chinoiserie images operated in a variety of sites), the complexities of 'Chinese style' in early modern Japan, and adaptations of English chinoiserie in Imperial Japan in the 1920s (what happens when chinoiserie itself becomes fixed and travels?)
3. Other circuits include other modes of production, other classifications of produced work, too– similarities, differences and connections with architecture and design? September issue of one nation-wide design magazine in China devoted its pages to a special issue on branding - designers and artists' collaborations with major international brands, as a nationalist move - not only consuming foreign brands or shaping them indirectly through taste of consumers, but shaping them directly as artists were commissioned to create new products. Model was Murakami Takashi – sense that China should, like Japan, move from manufacturing foreigners' designs to designing the products consumed internally and exported.
4. How might this conversation go in a few years, after the many Chinese art, design and architecture students currently studying overseas have established their

careers, whether in China, in the cities where they traveled to study, or in motion between these two and other sites?

5. Finally, 'chinoiserie' as a concept - we've had it suggested that chinoiserie is an optic. Do our viewing practices now correspond to those described historically as chinoiserie? Leaving aside very real historical formations like 'exotic China' that continue to be with us today, is it useful, even possible, to think the historical together with the contemporary - what we heard from Ben this morning with the work we've seen from artists throughout the day? Perhaps yes, but also perhaps not. Certainly a complex and omnipresent question within Forgotten Japonisme project discussions, led by Dr. Toshio Watanabe at TrAIN, Chelsea College of Art. But if not, and this is one thing that comes up frequently in discussions in the Japonisme project, are there ways in which the discrepancies might illuminate the way that we do see now? I don't think that it's important to incontrovertibly define 'chinoiserie' as a contemporary practice or in contemporary practice, but I do think it's important -because it's useful, as well as political and ethical-to pay attention to what we mean when we use it. Which is one reason for which Sinopticon's forthcoming exhibition is important and useful itself.

Dr. Sarah Teasley 12/10/10

Please keep in touch and keep looking for updates on the website - our blog will launch soon.

All the best, Eliza Gluckman

elizagluckman@hotmail.com

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## Events



### Friday Late at the V&A

#### V&A FRIDAY LATE

**Eliza curated the Chinese New Year Friday Late evening at the V&A, China Through the Looking Glass, in January 2011.**

**Read more and see images.**

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 National Trust







# SINOPTICON

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28 April to 7 July 2012

Exhibition and Events Guide

[www.sinopticon.org](http://www.sinopticon.org)

# SINOPTICON

{ contemporary chinoiserie in contemporary art }

28 April to 7 July 2012

A new multi-sited exhibition featuring the work of 13 international contemporary artists that explores the historical and cultural influences of China.

Curated by Eliza Gluckman

## **Saltram House, National Trust**

Stephanie Douet (UK) - WESSIELING (UK) - Grayson Perry (UK) - Ed Pien (Canada) -  
Meekyoung Shin (Korea) - Karen Tam (Canada)

## **Plymouth Arts Centre**

Suki Chan (UK) - Gayle Chong Kwan (UK) - Isaac Julien (UK) - Karen Tam (Canada) -  
Tsang Kin-Wah (HK/China)

## **Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery**

Suki Chan (UK) - Gayle Chong Kwan (UK) - Stephanie Douet (UK) - Christian Jankowski  
(Germany) - Isaac Julien (UK) - WESSIELING (UK) - Grayson Perry (UK) - Ed Pien  
(Canada) - Meekyoung Shin (Korea) - Karen Tam (Canada) - Tsang Kin-Wah  
(HK/China) - Laura White (UK)

## **Plymouth College of Art Gallery**

Erika Tan (UK) - Tsang Kin-Wah (HK/China)

## PROGRAMME

The exhibition has proved to be a rich source of exploration, discussion and creative inspiration for all the venues, who have put together a full and diverse programme of events. We hope you can join us.

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Cover: Ed Pien, *Bloom*, 2012, papercut (detail)

## INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION

'Chinoiserie', a French term meaning 'Chinese-esque', originates from the 17th century when very few Europeans had actually visited China. Instead a utopian, fictitious land was described and repeated through the use of decorative motifs and styles. As contact with the country grew, the influence and desire for China, its goods and culture, continued into the 19th century - a time of opium wars, trade and colonialism.

Plymouth, with its history of trade and collections of Chinese export arts and chinoiserie at the City Museum and Art Gallery and Saltram House, is the perfect location to explore and question our relationship with China through contemporary art.

Through form and decoration in chinoiserie we can look at issues such as value and taste, fantasy, replication and stereotyping of images. We can also look at the darker elements of chinoiserie such as identity politics, racism, trade and production values, authorship and the contested territory of the exotic.

'Sinopticon' is a construct of 'Sino' meaning China and 'optics', meaning ways of seeing. This exhibition, across the four partner venues, looks to unpick these themes through the work of contemporary artists and to shed light on how pervasive Chinese culture, industry and aesthetics are in our everyday lives.



Tsang Kin-Wah, *Re-presenting Hakka/Taiwan/Oriental/Michael's Image in Various Ways*, 2011 (detail)

Meekyoung Shin - *Translation: Ghost Series*, 2009-2012  
Photographer Peter Mallet, © the artist. Courtesy Haunch of Venison, London





Laura White, *The Esque Collection*, 2012 (detail)  
A SINOPTICON commission



Erika Tan, *Sensing Obscurity*, 2012  
Filmed at Saltram House  
A SINOPTICON commission



## TALKS AND TOURS

### Art Bite:

#### **Chinoiserie in the China Connection**

Take a bite-sized look at the historic chinoiserie items in the Museum's China Connection gallery with Curator of Decorative Art, Alison Cooper.

**Wednesday 2 May, 1pm to 1.30pm**

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

Free but please book by collecting a ticket in advance from the Museum or calling 01752 304774

### Teacher's Tour

Enjoy a special launch event and tour of the city centre venues for teachers with an introduction to our Teachers' Pack and an explanation of how to use the themes of 'Sinopticon' in the classroom.

**Wednesday 2 May, 4pm to 6.30pm**

Meet at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, finish at Plymouth Arts Centre.

Free but please book in advance by calling 01752 206114

### Paul Scott Artist Talk:

#### **Willows, Patterns and Promiscuity**

Examine the story of the Willow Pattern, its evolution into tableware designs, their worldwide distribution and association with a sense of place and cultural identity with ceramic artist, Paul Scott. Paul's talk will feature historical and contemporary ceramics, as well as his own version of the genre.

**Wednesday 9 May, 6pm to 7pm**

Plymouth College of Art

Free but please book in advance by calling 01752 203434

### Karen Tam Artist Talk:

#### **Orientially Yours: Karaoke Singers, Opium Addicts, Chowhounds and Curious Monkeys**

Find out more about the work of 'Sinopticon' artist, Karen Tam. Karen's research focuses on the various forms of constructions and imaginations of the Chinese in the West through sites of racial identity such as the Chinese restaurant, opium den, karaoke lounge, and Chinatown curios/souvenir shop.

**Thursday 10 May, 6pm to 7pm**

Plymouth Arts Centre

Free but please book in advance by calling 01752 206114

### Eliza Gluckman Curator Talk:

#### **Exploring 'Sinopticon'**

Discover more about the 'Sinopticon' exhibition and selected artists' work in more detail with Curator, Eliza Gluckman.

**Wednesday 16 May, 6pm to 7pm**

Plymouth College of Art

Free but please book in advance by calling 01752 203434

### Art Bite:

#### **Sinopticon: Contemporary Chinoiserie in Contemporary Art**

Take a look around the exhibition at the Museum with Partnerships and Exhibitions Officer, Judith Robinson.

**Wednesday 23 May, 1pm to 1.30pm**

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

Free but please book by collecting a ticket in advance from the Museum or calling 01752 304774



WESSIELING, *National Dress* at the V&A, 2011



## TALKS AND TOURS (continued)

### **Art Bite: Chinoiserie and Sound**

Join Neil Rose, Sonic Art Lecturer as he gives a personal introduction to Erika Tan's film 'Sensing Obscurity', on which he worked as sound composer. Neil will focus on the idea of chinoiserie linked with sound, before inviting you to watch the film.

**Wednesday 30 May, 12pm to 1pm  
(includes an invitation to a screening of 'Sensing Obscurity' by Erika Tan)**

Plymouth College of Art

Free but please book in advance by calling 01752 203434

### **Laura White Artist Talk: The 'Stuff' of the World**

Find out more about the work of 'Sinopticon' artist, Laura White as she talks about her practice. Laura "explores the language of sculpture using a range of materials from everyday objects to constructed matter." She is based in London and has exhibited widely in the UK and internationally.

**Wednesday 31 May, 6pm to 7pm**

Plymouth College of Art

Free but please book in advance by calling 01752 203434

### **Art Bite: China Connections**

Andrew Brewerton, Principal at Plymouth College of Art gives a short introduction to Erika Tan's film 'Sensing Obscurity'. Andrew will focus on the idea of chinoiserie, referring to his personal connections with China, before inviting visitors to view the film.

**Wednesday 13 June, 12pm to 1pm  
(includes an invitation to a screening of 'Sensing Obscurity' by Erika Tan)**

Plymouth College of Art

Free but please book in advance by calling 01752 203434

### **Art Bite: Chinoiserie in the Plymouth Porcelain Collection**

Take a look at the historic chinoiserie items in the Museum's significant Plymouth Porcelain collection with Curator of Decorative Art, Alison Cooper.

**Wednesday 13 June, 1pm to 1.30pm**

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

Free but please book by collecting a ticket in advance from the Museum or calling 01752 304774

### **Chinese Plant Walk**

Join one of the team at Saltram House to discover more about the Chinese plants around the garden.

**Wednesday 13 June, 2pm to 3pm**

Saltram House

Standard admission applies

### **Gayle Chong Kwan Artist Talk: Repeated Images and the Optic of Chinoiserie**

International artist, Gayle Chong Kwan draws upon her research at National Trust properties, the V&A and National Maritime Museum.

Find out more about the works she has created for the exhibition, as well as her wider art practice.

**Tuesday 19 June, 1.10pm to 2pm**

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

Free but please book by collecting a ticket in advance from the Museum or calling 01752 304774

## TALKS AND TOURS (continued)

### **Art Bite: Sinopticon: Contemporary Chinoiserie in Contemporary Art**

A second chance to look around 'Sinopticon: Contemporary Chinoiserie in Contemporary Art' at the Museum with Partnerships and Exhibitions Officer, Judith Robinson.

**Wednesday 27 June, 1pm to 1.30pm**

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

Free but please book by collecting a ticket in advance from the Museum or calling 01752 304774

### **Talk: Tom Freshwater in conversation with artist**

Join Tom Freshwater, Contemporary Arts Programme Manager for the National Trust's 'Trust New Art' programme, in conversation with one of the artists exhibiting in 'Sinopticon'.

**Monday 14 May, 6.30pm**

Saltram House

Free but please book in advance on 01752 333500

### **Tour: West is East: Asian and Pseudo-Asian Decorative Art at Saltram in the 18th Century**

Emile de Bruijn, who is researching chinoiserie (or imitation-Chinese) collections for the National Trust leads a tour of Saltram looking at the fashion for all things eastern in the 18th century and examining what 'China' meant to the English.

**Tuesday 26 June, 6.30pm**

Saltram House

Free but places are limited so please book in advance on 01752 333500



Karen Tam, *Terra dos Chinês*, 2011-2012 - mixed media, soap, papier-mâché, aluminum foil  
A SINOPTICON commission

## FILM AND PERFORMANCE

### **Ang Lee Double Bill: 'Sense and Sensibility' (U) and 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon' (12)**

Come and pay homage to one of today's greatest contemporary filmmakers in this screening of two of Ang Lee's most well-known films. 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon' won 4 Oscars in 2001, while 'Sense and Sensibility' won an Oscar for British actress, Emma Thompson in 2006 and is set in Plymouth's Saltram House.

**Wednesday 2 May, 5.30pm to 9pm**  
Plymouth College of Art

Free but please book in advance by calling 01752 203434

### **Ai Weiwei Rare Screening: Fairytale**

See a rare screening of this film by the internationally renowned Chinese artist and activist, Ai Weiwei. 'Fairytale' documents his 2007 project for the Documenta exhibition which takes place in Kassel, Germany once every 5 years. Ai Weiwei invited 1001 Chinese citizens of different ages and backgrounds to Germany to experience their own fairytale for 28 days. The film shows their preparations, challenges and journey as well as the ideas behind the artist's work. The film is 2.5 hours long so please feel free to bring a cushion and a blanket with you!

**Tuesday 22 May, 5.30pm to 8pm**  
Plymouth College of Art

Free but please book in advance by calling 01752 203434

### **Guilty Pleasures: Chinese Cinema**

Enjoy a 'surprise' screening of a classic Chinese film with a special introduction by Neil Rose, Sonic Artist, Lecturer and Asian cinema enthusiast. Neil will discuss three shortlisted films: 'Enter the Dragon' (18), 'Once Upon a Time in China' (15) and 'Hard Boiled' (18). He will then introduce his chosen one which will be screened. All three films have been selected in response to the theme of chinoiserie as they are key examples of Western breakthrough or faux Chinese cinematic works.

**Wednesday 20 June, 5.30pm to 7.30pm**

Plymouth College of Art

Free but please book in advance by calling 01752 203434



Artist, Ai Weiwei

## FILM AND PERFORMANCE (continued)

### Chinoiserie Sonic Art Performance

Sonic art composer Neil Rose, who produced the sound for Erika Tan's film 'Sensing Obscurity', will create a live sound and film performance in response to the theme of chinoiserie in cinema, media and popular Western/Eastern culture. This one-off performance is a collaboration between Neil, sound artist and radio producer, Mark Vernon and producer and performer, Shaun Lewin.

**Thursday 5 July, 5.30pm to 8.30pm**

**Live performance 7pm to 8pm**

Plymouth College of Art

Free but please book in advance by calling 01752 203434

### Better Life

**a film by Isaac Julien**

**Plus Film Academy Discussion**

A rare opportunity to see Isaac Julien's acclaimed film, 'Better Life', shot in China. Starring the legendary siren of Chinese cinema, Maggie Cheung, the film explores the desires and fantasies that drive people to risk everything for a better life. The 55 minute film is followed by a discussion led by Dr John Sealey at Plymouth Arts Centre about representation and stereotypes, as part of the Film Academy programme.

**Tuesday 12 June, film: 6pm to 7pm**

**talk: 7pm to 8.30pm**

Plymouth Arts Centre

Free but please book in advance by calling 01752 206114

### Chinese Film Series

A special programme of Chinese films will be on offer at Plymouth Arts Centre while 'Sinopticon' is on display in the City. For details of films, dates and times visit [www.plymouthartscentre.org/film](http://www.plymouthartscentre.org/film)



*In the Mood for Love*, 2000  
Directed by Wong Kar-Wai

WESSIELING, *Fashion Chess*, 2011  
Photography by Nigel Trebbeck © the artist



Grayson Perry, *High Priestess Cape*, 2007 (detail)  
Embroidered cape, rayon on satin  
Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery  
© Grayson Perry



## WORKSHOPS FOR ADULTS

### Paul Scott Master Class

Explore simple tissue print techniques and tissue transfer technology used within Chinese ceramic print processes with ceramic artist, Paul Scott. This workshop, which is hosted by Arts Matrix will use the principles of tissue transfer, concentrating on low-tech techniques using tissue, paper, stamped mono-prints and a selection of pre-printed Chinese transfers.

**Wednesday 9 May, 1pm to 5pm**

Plymouth College of Art

£20 for Arts Matrix members / £25 for non members  
Please book in advance by calling 01752 203434

### Traditional Cuts and Fake Antiques

Spend the day with exhibiting artist Karen Tam, who will introduce you to her work and lead a workshop in which you will be taught the craft of intricate paper cutting and learn about the history and contemporary contexts of this art form. The session will start with basic methods and by the end of the day you will have created your own complex design and fake antique paper cut.

**Friday 11 May, 11am to 5pm**

Plymouth Arts Centre

£20 per person / Reduced rate for PAC Home members  
Please book in advance by calling 01752 206114

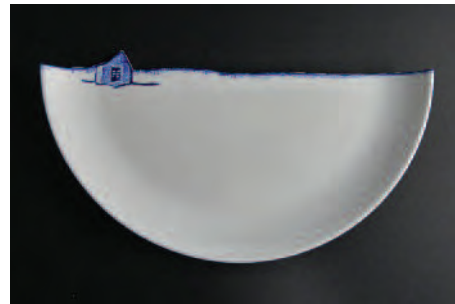
### Contemporary Craft Workshop: Lino Cuts

Draw inspiration from the 'Sinopticon' exhibition and the Museum's porcelain collection and use the lino cut method to print cards and beautiful papers, perfect for wrapping or decoration. One of the most popular and accessible methods of making a print, you will carve your design into the lino with special tools and then apply inks to create your unique prints. The lino blocks you make can be kept and reused at home for future projects. This artist-led workshop is suitable for all abilities.

**Saturday 9 June, 10.30am to 3.30pm**

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

£30 per person / Booking and payment in advance are essential. Please book by coming into the Museum or calling 01752 203434



Paul Scott, *Cumbrian Blue(s)* (not in exhibition)



## WORKSHOPS FOR CHILDREN

### **Architects of the Floating House**

Explore the ideas in the 'Sinopticon' exhibition and draw inspiration from the patterned surface, built structures and curious objects. Imagine a floating tree house or folding tea room and with the help of artist Graham Robinson construct your own special space from paper and sticks and decorate it chinoiserie style.

**Saturday 28 April, 10am to 1pm**

Plymouth Arts Centre

£4 per child, please book in advance by calling our box office on 01752 206114

### **Family Fun: Chinese Art**

Join in with a range of children's craft activities inspired by 'Sinopticon'.

**Saturday 5 to Monday 7 May  
12pm to 3pm**

Saltram House

Small charge for some activities  
Normal admission applies

### **East West Clay Odyssey**

Explore the history of ceramics between your fingers, from China to Cornwall. Collide East with West, past and present, robots and dragons.

**Saturday 12 May, 10am to 1pm**

Plymouth Arts Centre

£4 per child, please book in advance by calling our box office on 01752 206114

### **Lord Mayor's Day 2012: Hats and Pandas**

Call into the Museum before this year's Lord Mayor's Day Parade begins to make and decorate Chinese hats and paper plate pandas.

**Saturday 19 May, 10am to 12.30pm  
(last entries at 12pm)**

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

Free / Drop in for as little or as long as you like  
Please be patient if it's busy as activities will be organised on a first come, first served basis

### **Free Flowing Abstraction**

Make sketches of the objects in the exhibition then, with the help of artist Kathy Wray, transform your drawings into big and beautiful wall hangings, using bright colours and freeform ink painting.

**Saturday 26 May, 10am to 1pm**

Plymouth Arts Centre

£4 per child, please book in advance by calling our box office on 01752 206114

### **Half Term Workshops**

**Wonderful Wallpaper  
Wednesday 6 June**

**Chinese Paper Fans  
Thursday 7 June**

**Both sessions 10am to 1pm  
(last entries at 12.30pm)**

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

Free / Drop in for as little or as long as you like  
Please be patient if it's busy as activities will be organised on a first come, first served basis

## CELEBRATION WEEKEND

Come and join us at one or more of our exhibition venues as we celebrate 'Sinopticon' over the weekend of 2012's Dragon Boat Festival with a series of family-friendly activities.

### 'Adventures in Animation' Workshop

Take inspiration from the work of the artists exhibiting at Plymouth Arts Centre and create your own adventures in animation with artist and animator, Anna Aroussi.

**Saturday 23 June, 10am to 3pm  
(last entries at 2.30pm)**

Plymouth Arts Centre

Free / Drop in for as little or as long as you like  
Please be patient if it's busy as activities will be organised on a first come, first served basis

### 'Good Luck Dragons' Creative Sessions

Make miniature dragon boats and help create a good luck dragon with artist, Karen Evans (non-bookable). Learn the beautiful art of Chinese brush painting with artist, Lisa Class (limited places, booking essential). Both activities are suitable for all ages.

**Saturday 23 June  
12pm to 4pm (last entries at 3.30pm)  
for the non-bookable activity  
12pm to 2pm for the brush painting  
workshop**

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

Free / Drop in for as little or as long as you like  
Please be patient if it's busy as activities will be organised on a first come, first served basis

### Family-Friendly Printmaking Workshop

Use the Chinese wallpapers at Saltram House as inspiration to create roller stamps and produce your own sample of printed wallpaper with Catherine Cartwright, printmaker-artist from Double Elephant Print Workshop, Exeter.

**Saturday 23 June**

**12pm to 12.45pm**

**1pm to 1.45pm**

**2pm to 2.45pm**

**3pm to 3.45pm**

Plymouth College of Art

Free but please book your preferred time slot in advance by calling 01752 203434

### Chinoiserie Cycle Session

Travel the environmentally friendly way to Saltram House with the Curators of Plymouth Arts Centre. Park your bicycle at Plymouth Arts Centre and join us for an introduction to 'Sinopticon' and the work in our venue. We will then take a healthy and informative journey to Saltram House where we will provide a tour of the exhibition. You can then take part in the activities available.

Dress yourself and your bicycle for the occasion! Families are welcome, but you must be prepared to cycle 3.5 miles to Saltram House. The ride will be supported by stewards for safety.

**Sunday 24 June, 10am to 1pm**

Meet at Plymouth Arts Centre

Free but please book in advance by calling 01752 203434

## CELEBRATION WEEKEND (continued)

### Discovering 'Sinopticon' at Saltram

Join us for your chance to explore the works of art at Saltram for FREE. Enjoy an afternoon of family fun exploring the ideas behind this unique exhibition. Take inspiration from the historic and contemporary chinoiserie on display and get creative with Chinese-themed craft activities with the National Trust and Plymouth Arts Centre.

**Sunday 24 June, 1pm to 5pm  
(gates open at 11am)**

Saltram House

Free entry for one day only / Drop in for as little or as long as you like. Please be patient if it's busy as activities will be organised on a first come, first served basis

### Waste Fantasy Land

Join exhibiting artist Gayle Chong Kwan in a family-friendly activity. Sculpt an imaginary landscape from recycled materials, based upon motifs found in the chinoiserie wallpapers at Saltram House. Contribute to a fantasy landscape, which will be exhibited at Plymouth Arts Centre the following week.

**Sunday 24 June, 1pm to 5pm**  
Saltram House (PAC Activity Tent)

Free / Drop in for as little or as long as you like  
Please be patient if it's busy as activities will be organised on a first come, first served basis

### Cardboard Club Day Trip to River City

Spend the day creating windbreaks, kites and windmills. Bring a picnic, find a spot and relax by your bespoke screen. All the usual Cardboard Club surprises with a special chinoiserie twist.

**Sunday 24 June, 1pm to 4pm**

Plymouth Arts Centre

Free / Drop in for as little or as long as you like  
Please be patient if it's busy as activities will be organised on a first come, first served basis.



Gayle Chong Kwan, *Impressions of Inner Mongolia*, 2012  
Animated film  
A SINOPTICON commission

Karen Tam - *Genuine American Chop Suey Served With Some Hokey-Pokey!*, paper cut



## VENUE INFORMATION



### Saltram House

Plympton PL7 1UH

01752 333503

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/saltram](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/saltram)

£10.40 adult / £5.10 child

£25.90 family (2 adults) / £15.60 family (1 adult). National Trust Members free

12pm to 4.30pm Monday to Thursday, Saturday and Sunday

Last admission 45 minutes before closing

Closed Fridays

Disabled access from the front of the building

Free parking available



### Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

Drake Circus, Plymouth PL4 8AJ

01752 304774

[www.plymouthmuseum.gov.uk](http://www.plymouthmuseum.gov.uk)

Free admission

10am to 5.30pm Tuesday to Friday

10am to 5pm Saturdays and Bank

Holiday Mondays

Last admission 30 minutes before closing

Closed Sundays and Mondays

Disabled access from the rear of the building

On-street short term parking available

Longer stay parking (Regent Street, Drake Circus

Shopping Mall) is a short walk away



### Plymouth Arts Centre

38 Looe Street, Plymouth PL4 0EB

01752 206114

[www.plymouthartscentre.org](http://www.plymouthartscentre.org)

Free admission

10am to 8.30pm Tuesday to Saturday

4pm to 8.30pm Sunday

Last admission 30 minutes before closing

Closed Mondays

Disabled access from the front of the building

On-street short term parking available - Longer stay

parking (Bilbury Street/Exeter Street/Charles Cross -

underneath Staples, Notte Street) is a short walk away.



### Plymouth College of Art Gallery

Tavistock Place, Plymouth PL4 8AT

01752 203434

[www.plymouthart.ac.uk/gallery](http://www.plymouthart.ac.uk/gallery)

Free admission

9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

Last admission 30 minutes before closing

Disabled access from the front of the building

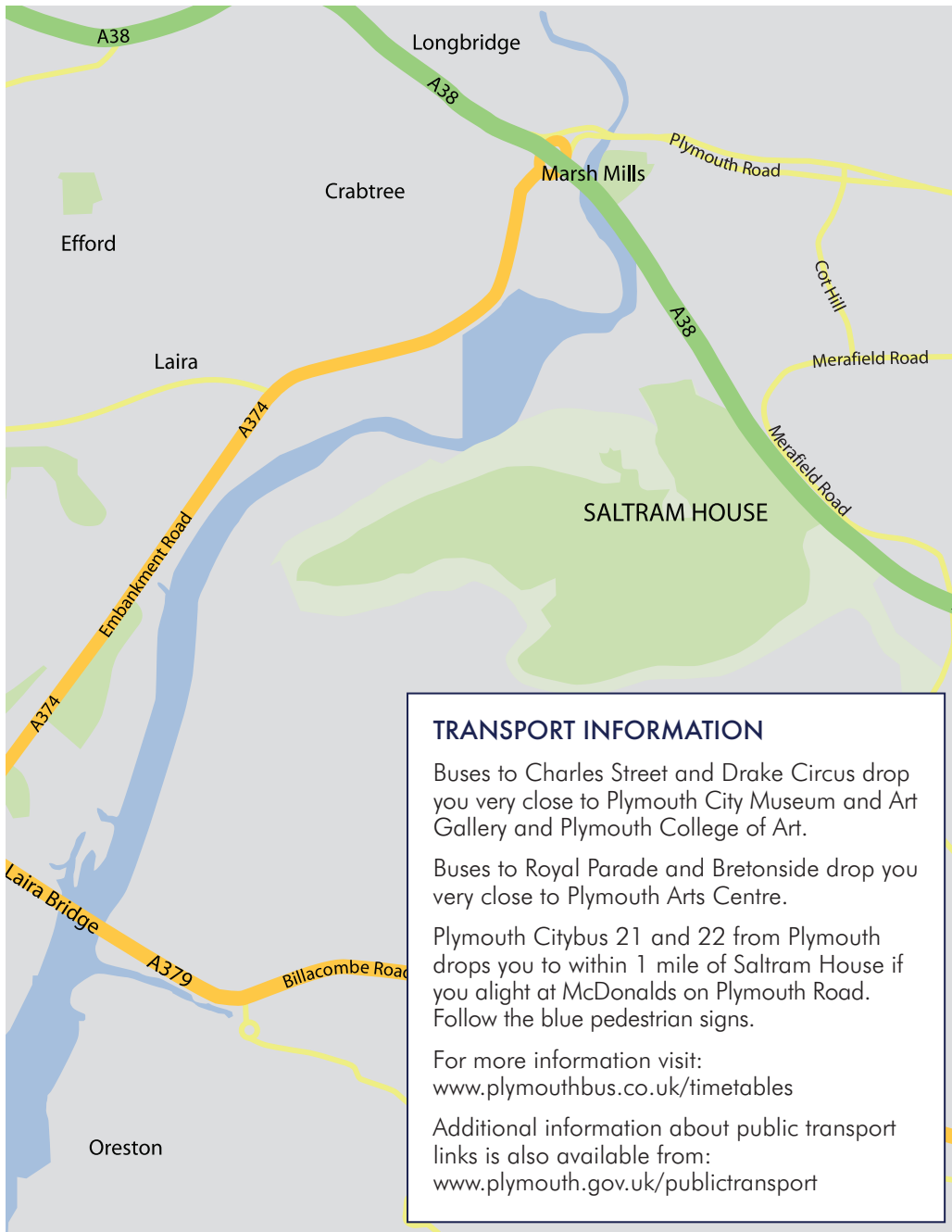
On-street short term parking available

Longer stay parking (Regent Street, Drake Circus

Shopping Mall) is a short walk away

## MAP AND TRANSPORT INFORMATION





### TRANSPORT INFORMATION

Buses to Charles Street and Drake Circus drop you very close to Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery and Plymouth College of Art.

Buses to Royal Parade and Bretonside drop you very close to Plymouth Arts Centre.

Plymouth Citybus 21 and 22 from Plymouth drops you to within 1 mile of Saltram House if you alight at McDonalds on Plymouth Road. Follow the blue pedestrian signs.

For more information visit:  
[www.plymouthbus.co.uk/timetables](http://www.plymouthbus.co.uk/timetables)

Additional information about public transport links is also available from:  
[www.plymouth.gov.uk/publictransport](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/publictransport)

'Sinopticon' is part of the National Trust's 'Trust New Art' programme,  
in partnership with Plymouth Arts Centre, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery  
and Plymouth College of Art Gallery.





# SINOPTICON

{ contemporary chinoiserie in contemporary art }

## SINOPTICON {PLYMOUTH}



### A multi-sited exhibition held in Plymouth from 28 April to 7 July 2012

SINOPTICON culminated in a multi-sited exhibition across the city of Plymouth in late spring/early summer 2012. Four of the city's major cultural venues joined forces to present the work of a number of contemporary artists, all of whom draw inspiration from the wealth of chinoiserie in its many forms.

The exhibition featured the work of:

Suki Chan (UK) {} Gayle Chong Kwan (UK) {} Stephanie Douet (UK) {} Christian Jankowski (Germany) {} Isaac Julien (UK) {} Tsang KinWah (HK/China) {} WESSIELING (UK) {} Grayson Perry (UK) {} Ed Pien (Canada) {} Meekyoung Shin (Korea) {} Karen Tam (Canada) {} Erika Tan (UK) {} Laura White (UK)

Taking chinoiserie as a starting point this exhibition explores our relationship with China both historically and through contemporary eyes.

'Chinoiserie', a French term meaning 'Chinese-esque', derived from the Seventeenth Century as an entirely European style that was influenced wholly from China and the East. The China that was being emulated was in fact fictitious and very few real images of life in China had reached the west. Instead a Utopian land was described and repeated through the use of decorative motifs and styles. The influence and desire for China, it's trade and culture, ramified in to the 19th century, opium wars, trade and colonialism.

The creation of chinoiserie in the West could be seen as a way of reigning in and controlling foreign influences. 'Sino' is a construct of 'Sino' meaning China and 'optic's, meaning ways of seeing. For some of the artists involved in Sinoopticon the lure of chinoiserie and the push-pull of its connotations, are manifest in their work. Emile de Bruijn, the National Trust expert on chinoiserie describes the earliest interest in China in the c.16<sup>th</sup> as themed by 'an attraction and revulsion of the East'; so too, in the c.21<sup>st</sup>, chinoiserie's aesthetic allure, seduces us and its historical stereotypes and reverberations of

## Artists

[Tsang KinWah](#)  
[Laura White](#)  
[Susan Stockwell](#)  
[Suki Chan](#)  
[Gayle Chong Kwan](#)  
[Stephanie Douet](#)  
[Christian Jankowski](#)  
[Isaac Julien](#)  
[Grayson Perry](#)  
[Ed Pien](#)  
[Meekyoung Shin](#)  
[Karen Tam](#)  
[Erika Tan](#)  
[WESSIELING](#)

Works were displayed at the following four venues:  
[Saltram House, National Trust](#)  
[Plymouth Arts Centre](#)  
[Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery](#)  
[Plymouth College of Art Gallery](#)  
The partners also offered a programme of related events and education activities. See [Events pages](#)

trade and exploitation, repels us.

Through form and decorative narrative in chinoiserie we can discuss value and taste, fantasy, replication and stereotyping of images. So too, the darker elements of chinoiserie's historical routes; identity politics, racism, trade and production values, authorship and the contested territory of exoticism. This exhibition looks to unpick these themes in a contemporary context to shed light on how pervasive Chinese culture, industry and aesthetics are in our everyday lives.

See [Events for SINOPTICON {Plymouth}](#).



Eliza Gluckman in front of work by Tsang Kinwah SINOPTICON 2012 photo credit Dom Moore



Tsang KinWah, 'You are extremely terrified but you are definitely not a racist', 2012 (PAC) photo credit Dom Moore



Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, installation, North Gallery works by Meekyoung Shin and Isaac Julien, photo credit Dom Moore



Meekyoung Shin, Ghost, PMAG, photo credit Dom Moore



Karen Tam, intervention at Slatram House, photo credit Dom Moore



Karen Tam, Terra dos Chines Curio Shop, PAC, photo credit Dom Moore



Grayson Perry, High Priestess Cape, Saltram House, photo credit Dom Moore



Chinoiserie Sonic Art Performance, Neil Rose and Mark Vernon and Shaun Lewin, PCA, Sinopticon event, photo Dom Moore



Ed Pien, Bloom, hand cut paper, Saltram House, photo: Dom Moore



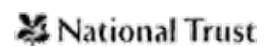
Erika Tan, Sensing Obscurity, PCA, photo: Dom Moore



WESSIELING, Fashion Chess, at Saltram House, photo credit Dom Moore

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# SINOPTICON

{ contemporary chinoiserie in contemporary art }

## Events

### Plymouth Events Programme



SINOPTICON {PLYMOUTH} has proved to be a rich source of exploration, discussion and creative inspiration for all four venues. The programme included talks and tours, film and performance, workshops for adults and children and a special celebration weekend on 23-24 June.

Highlights included:

- A double-bill of two of Ang Lee's most well-known films: 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon' and 'Sense and Sensibility' at Plymouth College of Art on 2 May from 5.30pm.
- A free talk by 'Sinopticon' artist Karen Tam at Plymouth Arts Centre on 10 May from 6 to 7pm.
- A free talk by exhibition curator, Eliza Gluckman at Plymouth College of Art on Wednesday 16 May from 6pm to 7pm.
- A rare screening of Ai Weiwei's 'Fairytale', which documents his 2007 project for Germany's Documenta exhibition, also at Plymouth College of Art on Tuesday 22 May from 5.30pm to 8pm.

**Pick up a free 'Exhibition and Events Guide' at any of the venues or download it [here](#).**

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# SINOPTICON

{ contemporary chinoiserie in contemporary art }

## The Project



SINOPTICON is a long-term project investigating ideas and themes of a contemporary chinoiserie in contemporary art. The 18th century term, ‘chinoiserie’, arose from the mania for Chinese artefacts that erupted in the seventeenth century transforming taste and aesthetics in the West forever. Now China is back, upsurging as a country of major economic and political impact – and with it a new wave of chinoiserie for the twenty-first century. SINOPTICON looks at chinoiserie afresh in the context of contemporary art and incorporates design, display, desire and frippery alongside politics and trade, authorship, interpretation and cultural misunderstanding, fantasy, escapism and fiction. SINOPTICON includes an extensive research and development phase, a symposium, residencies, new commissions and a touring exhibition.

## Background

In 2008 Eliza developed the exhibition ‘Contemporary Chinoiserie’ at the Collyer Bristow Gallery, London. The exhibition curated by [Day + Gluckman](#) and exhibiting works by UK and Canadian artists Lisa Cheung, Gayle Chong Kwan, Helen Couchman, Stephanie Douet, Ed Pien, Neil Stewart, Pamela So, Karen Tam and Erika Tan, raised some issues that we wanted to explore further. While the work as seen in its entirety manifested certain aspects of the visual language of China or Chinoiserie, there were undercurrents of tension and enquiry that have scope for further development. Themes such as alienation, cultural misunderstanding, authenticity and sudden changes in society emerged. At this particular point in time, with the Olympic baton being handed from East to West, and the economics of Europe affecting China, now is an apposite time to use the metaphor of Chinoiserie to expand the discourse of artistic exchange between the two sides of the globe.

Images:

Pamela So, *Aliens in paradise*, 2008, colour photograph mounted on board, 8 individual pieces 22 x 22 cm  
Stephanie Douet, *Gang*, 2010, wood and paint, dimensions variable (detail)  
Gayle Chong Kwan, *Downing Street, The Land of Peach Blossoms*, 2008, c-type print (detail)





# SINOPTICON

{ contemporary chinoiserie in contemporary art }

## About Us

**Eliza Gluckman**, Curator, SINOPTICON: In 2003, whilst studying her MA in Curating Contemporary Art at the Royal College of Art she wrote her thesis on 'Chinese Contemporary Art exhibited in the West from 1989-2003'. She went on to receive a grant from Arts Council London to travel to China, Hong Kong and Taiwan to meet artists and curators and develop ideas. She ran the gallery at Asia House, London for its inaugural year, curating 'Chinese Contemporary: Fantasy Landscapes' in 2006, including Gayle Chong Kwan's series Cockaigne. She has also worked as head of Marketing and Events at SPACE Studios, London, and has overseen large installations of public works for the Biennale of Sydney 2004. She is now a freelance curator working with curatorial partner Lucy Day as [Day+Gluckman](#), programming exhibitions for the Collyer Bristow Gallery, London amongst others; she writes for Art Asia Pacific Magazine and occasionally for other publications and websites including *The Guardian* arts blog.

**Gayle Chong Kwan**, founding artist, SINOPTICON  
[www.gaylechongkwan.com](http://www.gaylechongkwan.com)

**Stephanie Douet**, founding artist, SINOPTICON  
[www.stephaniedouet.co.uk](http://www.stephaniedouet.co.uk)

## Steering Group

The Project is supported by a Steering Group who meet occasionally to give feedback and suggestions to the direction of the project and the commissions. The members are:

- Eliza Gluckman, founding curator of Sinopticon and part of the Day+Gluckman Curatorial Partnership
- Gayle Chong Kwan: founding artist
- Lucy Day: freelance curator, writer and consultant and part of the Day+Gluckman Curatorial Partnership with Eliza
- Stephanie Douet: founding artist
- Tom Freshwater: Contemporary Arts Programme Manager, National Trust
- Ying Kwok: Curator, Chinese Arts Centre
- Isabel Vasseur: Curator, and [Director of Art Office](#)

## Organisations & People involved

**Tom Freshwater**, Contemporary Art Programme Manager, **National Trust** {Tom backed the project from its infancy and has been a great support both strategically, artistically and fiscally}

*Sinopticon is financially supported by Trust New Art, a programme that connects more people to National Trust places through contemporary art and craft. A partnership between [National Trust](#) with [Arts Council England](#). More details at [trustnewart.wordpress.com](http://trustnewart.wordpress.com).*

**Glenn Adamson**, Head of Research, **Victoria and Albert Museum** {Glenn helped to shape the SINOPTICON Symposium held at the V&A – a seriously brilliant mind}

**Lucy Day** [Day+Gluckman curatorial partnership](#) {Lucy Day and Eliza Gluckman have been working together since 2006 – the partnership creates a great space to support each other and develop ambitious projects together}

**Paula Orrell** Freelance curator (previously Plymouth Arts Centre) {Paula was the Plymouth founder of the project – running with it and making it all connect up in Plymouth}

Day+Gluckman  
curatorial partnership

V&A



National Trust

