



CALL FOR PAPER

In recent years, historians have moved away from the Marxist or capitalist approach, to refocus on the cultural relationship between beings and things, and to rethink the various contexts other than purely economic ones, in which objects are signifiers (Thing theory). As Bill Brown puts it, objects enable historians to “make contact with the “real” [...] in accounts of everyday life and material habitus”. Moreover, according to David Kingery, objects reflect “truest representations” of values and meanings in societies. It seems important, therefore, to put “things” back into context—especially in their own life cycle in order to find the habits which they were associated with in the past—and to decipher the authentic cultural signs and symbols that have been forgotten or kept alive. The study by Craig Clunas *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*, symbolizes the effort to reconsider objects within their original context and the social and cultural messages they convey. In recent years Anne Gerritsen and Dorothy Ko have also considerably renewed the approach to Asian material culture, especially the social life of objects. The conference explores objects as forms of cultural heritage, paying attention to their use and importance, as well as to the different values and emotions that have been attached to them through the ages.

Things constitute a memory of identities through which mentalities can be assessed as they are reflected in the “subject-object relation”. Indeed, according to Brown, they are more than objects as they “exceed their mere materialisation” and have a presence. Things have a cultural layer; more exactly they are “culturalised, humanised, and can therefore be anthropomorphised”, even “personified and made into narrative characters”. As such, they may be seen as processes of enculturation: Humans interact with them (or choose not), and integrate them in their social existence, often as markers of status and class. Things also reveal personal taste and material desires.

How did things in Asia and Southeast Asia affect daily lives and what were the relationships of their owners with specific goods, tools, or products? How was material culture perceived in the past in the East, and how in the present day, “vintage” objects survive in a globalised world that emphasises consumerism?

This conference aims to provide a better understanding of past and present societies through objects that are no longer used or whose “life” is endangered by new modern lifestyles. We also aim to reconstruct the vision and perception of time through the use of objects, that is: routines; the idea of rapid or progressive obsolescence; phenomena such as “ageing” or travelling things; the different life cycles from the making to the “death” of objects (manufacturing, use/reuse, meaning in society, destruction etc.); the crystallisation and therefore immortalisation of some objects in the memory of some individuals through emotions and feelings.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

- **Prof. Dato Dr. Ghulam-Sarwar Yousof**
University of Malaya, Malaysia
 - **Prof. Crispin Bates**
Sunway University, Malaysia & Edinburgh University, UK
 - **Prof. Sabine Chaouche**
Sunway University, Malaysia
 - **Prof. Craig Clunas**
The University of Oxford, UK
 - **Prof. Anne Gerritsen**
Warwick University, UK
 - **Prof. Dorothy Ko**
Barnard College, Columbia University, US
 - **Dr. Welyne Jehom**
University of Malaya, Malaysia
 - **Dr. Fiona Wong**
Sunway University, Malaysia
- ...and more in our list

CONFERENCE THEME

ICMC 2021 invites researchers to explore the following themes:

• UTILITARIAN OBJECTS

Objects which played significant roles in rural or urban Asian or Southeast Asian communities in daily life as they were repeatedly used (tools for specific crafts or for the home such as kitchen utensils, objects used for hygiene or beauty etc.)

• MOVING OBJECTS

Everyday life objects used when travelling during a period of time; objects travelling from one place to another over time, brought in another country as markers of identity (e.g. diasporas, migrations or emigrations), or by merchants (e.g. marketplaces and retailing) in Asia or Southeast Asia through the ages.

• PLAYFUL OBJECTS

Objects designed to entertain children or families in daily life; for hobbies, pastimes and leisure time (toys, puppets, masks, props and costumes; objects used in festivals etc.)

• OBJECTS THROUGH TIME

Ceremonial, symbolic or ritualistic objects which passed from one generation to another; vintage objects; personal objects which gain sentimental value, or which were linked to the construction of identity and/or gender over time; timeless objects; ageing objects; recycled and second-hand objects

Note that we welcome contributions that have an “history from below” perspective and/or pay particular attention to the lower classes, the world of tradesmen and their shops, the workshop/craft space but also the home and private spaces.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Submit a 500-word proposal with your CV to Prof. Sabine Chaouche and Dr. Fiona Wong at info_icmc@sunway.edu.my by 20th April 2021. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by 20th May 2021.

PAPER DURATION

20 minutes followed by Q/A

PUBLICATION

The proceedings of the conference will be published in an edited volume. Presenters will be expected to submit a full paper with 5,000 - 8,000 words.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION GUIDELINE

Refer to <https://university.sunway.edu.my/icmc2021> for the Proposal Submission Guidelines.