

CFP: Utopias on Display [Workshop, Pennsylvania State University, April 9, 2016]

Utopias on Display: Visions of Past and Future in Modern Japan (A Global Asias Workshop)

Dates: April 9, 2016

Venue: Department of Asian Studies, Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA.

The trite description of Japan as a modern paradox, simultaneously a repository of ancient tradition and font of cutting-edge technology, is the product of a long history of conscious image-making. Throughout the modern period and continuing to the present day, displays of the products of Japanese culture and industry, from high art to public infrastructure, have performed a dual role: promoting idealized images of Japan to international audiences, while educating the Japanese public about what the country can and should become. Exhibits can involve either the dispatch of materials abroad or the invitation of people to sites in Japan. Whether they display historical artifacts, such as costumes of Nō theater or Edo-period castles, or technological achievements like robots and bullet trains, exhibits of Japan have aimed to define Japan of the present through utopian visions of its past and future. Bringing the focus of national identity to the distant past or near future effectively papers over uncomfortable aspects of the present, as well as problematic elements of recent history.

Leaders in Japan's government, economic, and cultural spheres have consistently sought to harness the power of the exhibition to pursue personal and public, local, national, and international goals. The potential political, economic, and symbolic impact of exhibitions makes them the focus of attention and contention, garnering resources, but also inviting debate and dissension about how those resources will be deployed and what kinds of images would be presented. The goals and unintended consequences of varied endeavors include changing identities on the international and domestic levels, cultural and technological developments, and permanent changes to urban landscapes in the cities hosting exhibits or on display.

The aim of this workshop, part of Penn State's Global Japan Program, supported with funds from the Japan Foundation, is to bring together scholars in a variety of disciplines to discuss the particular questions and issues surrounding Japanese exhibits of idealized pasts and futures. We invite proposals addressing any aspect of exhibitions in or of Japan, such as:

- Uses of exhibitions to further notions of regional and national identity
- Displaying Japan and/or aspects of Japanese life abroad (including imperial exhibitions in prewar Japan)
- Museum displays and discussions of the past and future of Japan
- Impact of Western notions of display on Japanese practices
- Ideas of technological and other utopias on display
- Heritage sites and the uses of domestic and international tourism in "inventing" identities
- The role of exhibitions in Japan's international relations

## SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Please send an abstract of 250 words maximum and a short CV by January 15, 2016 to both Dr. Ran Zwigenberg at [ruz12@psu.edu](mailto:ruz12@psu.edu) and Dr. Jessamyn Abel at [jua14@psu.edu](mailto:jua14@psu.edu). Successful applicants will be notified by 10 February 2016. Travel and accommodation costs will be covered by Penn State's Global Japan Project.