

# Symposium in context of the special exhibition **Dust & Silk**

Weltmuseum Wien  
April 28<sup>th</sup>–29<sup>th</sup> 2022

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In cooperation with the research project *Dispersed and Connected*  
(FWF/PEEK AR 394-G24)

Project director & curator: **Maria-Katharina Lang**  
(Institute for Social Anthropology / Austrian Academy of Sciences)

Exhibition concept & design:  
**Maria-Katharina Lang & Christian Sturminger**

<https://www.dispersedandconnected.net>

April 28<sup>th</sup>–29<sup>th</sup> 2022

Weltmuseum Wien, WMW Forum  
and in the special exhibition  
*Staub & Seide*

Registration:  
[register online](#)

Entrance free  
(plus museum admission)

*The symposium will bring together scientists, artists, museum specialists and project participants who will take a closer look at selected aspects and objects of the exhibition and, on the other hand, expand on them through their contributions.*

*Topics include Mongolian art of the past and present, infrastructure projects in Central Asia, contemporary Uzbek art and music, selected collector biographies, object histories and a lecture by Michael Taussig on notebooks and drawings.*

*The lectures (in English) will take place in the Weltmuseum Forum and in the exhibition.*



**FWF**  
Der Wissenschaftsfonds.



**MARKK**  
MUSEUM AM ROTHENBAUM  
Kulturen und Künste der Welt

**ÖAW**  
ÖSTERREICHISCHE  
AKADEMIE DER  
WISSENSCHAFTEN



# Programme

# Symposium in context of the special exhibition **Dust & Silk**

Weltmuseum Wien  
April 28<sup>th</sup>–29<sup>th</sup> 2022

## Day 1 – Thursday, April 28<sup>th</sup>

10:00–10:30

*Opening & Introduction*

**Jonathan Fine** (Weltmuseum Wien)

**Maria-Katharina Lang** (Austrian Academy of Sciences)

**Tsetsentsolmon Baatarnaran** (National University of Mongolia)

**Christian Sturminger** (Vienna)

**Johannes Heuer** (Vienna)

10:30–11:00

**Christina Franken** (KAAK / DAI Bonn)

*Finds and Knowledge between East and West:*

*Some Archaeological Evidence of Intercultural Relations in Karabalgasun and Karakorum / Mongolia*

11:00–11:30

**Barbara Matuella** (Weltmuseum Wien)

*Lost in Admiration – Seeing the 14<sup>th</sup> Century “Black Gold” Chasuble from Regensburg through a Textile Conservator’s Eyes.*

11:30–12:00

*Break*

12:00–13:00

*Exhibition tour*

13:00–14:30

*Lunch break*

14:30–15:00

**Tsetsentsolmon Baatarnaran & Maria-Katharina Lang**

(National University of Mongolia / Austrian Academy of Sciences)

*Connected to be Dispersed: Road and Railway Projects in Mongolia*

15:00–15:30

**Emilia Róža SUŁEK** (University of Fribourg)

*The Rough Side of Silk: Connectivity and (Dis)Repair on Central Asia’s New Roads*

15:30–15:45

*Break*

15:45–16:00

**Tsetsentsolmon Baatarnaran & Maria-Katharina Lang**

(National University of Mongolia / Austrian Academy of Sciences)

*Contemporary Mongolian Art & Mongol Zurag (Mongolian Painting)*

16:00–16:30

Artist Talk with **Nomin Bold** (Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia)

(Exhibition)

16:30–17:00

**Daniele Ventola** (Naples)

*Windtraveller Travelogue*

(Exhibition)

17:00–18:00

*Break*

18:00–19:30

**Michael T. Taussig** (Columbia University, New York)

*Logbooks of the Imagination: Towards a New Silk Road*

## Day 2 – Friday, April 29<sup>th</sup>

10:00–10:30

**Margareta Pavaloi** (Völkerkundemuseum VPST, Heidelberg)

*Victor Goldschmidt – The Collection of a Scholar*

10:30–11:00

**Gabriele Anderl** (Vienna)

*Provenance Unknown: The East Asian Collection of Anton and Walter Exner*

Discussion

11:00–11:30

*Break*

11:30–12:00

**Niklas Leverenz** (Hamburg)

*Fragments of the Painting The battle of Qurman of 1760*

12:00–12:30

**Bettina Zorn** (Weltmuseum Wien)

*The Battle Copper Engravings in the Weltmuseum Wien’s Collection and their Historical Embeddedness*

12:40–13:00

**Jana Reimer** (MARKK, Hamburg)

*What we know and what we don’t know: Circumstantial information on a fragmented collection and its fragmentary history (Exhibition)*

13:00–14:30

*Lunch Break*

14:30–15:00

**Sophia Abplanalp** (Vienna)

*Travelling Tiles – Ilkhanid Lustre Tiles from the Shrine of the Imamzada Yahya in Varamin*

15:00–15:30

**Tobias Mörike** (Weltmuseum Wien)

*Layered Vision: Central Asian Architectural Fragments in European Collections*

15:30–16:00

**Barbara Karl** (Bern, Vienna)

*Exchanges of Taste: Textiles and Concepts of Power on the Maritime “Silk Road” c. 1600 – The Spanish Cape*

16:00–16:30

*Break*

16:30–17:00

**Alexey Ulko** (Tashkent, Uzbekistan)

*Censorship in Central Asian Contemporary Art in a Time of Hybrid War*

17:00–17:30

**Kerstin Klenke** (PhA, Austrian Academy of Sciences)

*Sonic Statecrafting: The Near, the Far and the Impossible in Uzbekistani Estrada*

followed by Music Lounge & Drinks (end 21:00)

\*Programme changes possible

# Abstracts

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## Day 1 – Thursday, April 28<sup>th</sup>

**Christina Franken** (Commission for Archaeology of Non-European Cultures (KAAK) / Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (DAI), Bonn)  
*Finds and Knowledge between East and West: Some Archaeological Evidence of Intercultural Relations in Karabalgasun and Karakorum / Mongolia*

Exchange and mobility have always been central components of nomadic ways of life, also in Central Asia in the Middle Ages. Many years of archaeological research on the nomadic urban settlements of Karabalgasun and Karakorum in Mongolia's Orkhon Valley have yielded numerous indications of far-reaching relations and contacts between East and West. The mutual influence is evident both in the find material and in the design and architecture of the city complexes.

**Barbara Pönighaus-Matuella** (Weltmuseum Wien)  
*Lost in Admiration - Seeing the 14<sup>th</sup> Century "Black Gold" Chasuble from Regensburg through a Textile Conservator's Eyes*

Barbara Pönighaus-Matuella gives a short summary on the insights published so far, and tries an approach to the precious fabric's original appearance and message with the help of reconstruction drawings and motif comparisons.

**Tsetsentsolmon Baatarnaran & Maria-Katharina Lang** (National University of Mongolia / Austrian Academy of Sciences)  
*Connected to be Dispersed: Road and Railway Projects in Mongolia*

Roads and railway plans in Mongolia had been often connected to mining and transportation of mineral extracts. The railway history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century created positive imaginations modified by Soviet modernisation. New narratives and imaginations have arisen with road and rail infrastructures to be connected to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) or the "New Silk Road". Some of the roads planned on paper have been realised and connected to the international network of transport and trading routes. In addition to the impact on the natural environment caused by mining and building infrastructure, historically and at present, one mainly observes full freight wagons and trucks leaving Mongolia, dispersing resources and returning empty, and increasing the loads of goods traversing the country.

**Emilia Róża SUŁEK** (University of Fribourg)  
*The Rough Side of Silk. Connectivity and (Dis)Repair on Central Asia's New Roads*

The idea of the (new) «Silk Road», traversing the Central Asian steppes, mountains and deserts, captures the imagination and creates a link with a mythical golden age of peaceful, commercial ties between East and West. Just as the (old) Silk Road was the invention of a man, in this case a German geographer, Ferdinand von Richthofen, so too the new roads being built under Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are largely a rhetorical device and (self)marketing instrument used by Chinese government agencies. The BRI is narrated as a peace-bringer, development tool and wealth generator. It is supposed to improve connectivity, gender equality and enhance mutual understanding. But can a road live up to such ambitious aims? While the media coverage focus on construction-related expenditure, kilometres of roads (built or only planned) and ribbon-cutting ceremonies, this presentation shows some phenomena that are only visible after the camera lights go out: the more down-to-earth side of these new roads and their mundane effects on the ground.

**Tsetsentsolmon Baatarnaran & Maria-Katharina Lang** (National University of Mongolia / Austrian Academy of Sciences)  
*Contemporary Mongolian Art & Mongol Zurag (Mongolian Painting)*

The Mongolian painting style, *Mongol Zurag*, used and newly reinterpreted by contemporary artists, carries elements of Buddhist thangka painting. As a specific style it was constructed and coined in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century during communist rule in Mongolia. Despite the political repressions against Buddhism and Buddhist art in Mongolia, as part of *Mongol Zurag* techniques of thangka painting continued to be taught even though in an officially secular Soviet-defined setting at the School of Fine Arts in Ulaanbaatar. In this presentation we trace the formation and transformation of this art style which is flourishing today in new ways and reinterpretations in the oeuvres of contemporary artists such as Nomin Bold and Khosbayar Narankhuu, whose paintings are exhibited in the exhibition *Dust & Silk*.

**Nomin Bold** (Ulaanbaatar)  
*Artist Talk*

The artist Nomin Bold will talk about her painting *Time Link* and her artistic work in the exhibition *Dust & Silk*.

**Daniele Ventola** (Naples)  
*Windtraveller Travelogue*

The social anthropologist Daniele Ventola spent 600 days walking the "Silk Road", seeing the Caucasus and Central Asia by foot. The 7500 km walk was a cultural project, aimed at demonstrating the futility of borders and the universal nature of the human being. Daniele Ventola will talk about his project in the exhibition *Dust & Silk*.

**Michael T. Taussig** (Columbia University, New York)  
*Logbooks of the Imagination: Towards a New Silk Road*

Imagine I am an explorer in far-off lands of fable and mystery being harnessed for trade and science. Why am I doing this? What am I running from? Or to? To whom am I writing and drawing when I set down my explorations of the unknown in my notebooks and diaries? Am I unsettling my conventions or reinforcing them with this encounter with Otherness and Strangeness? Is my very body opening? Or closing? Let me consult my diaries and notebooks and their drawings to answer these questions (Michael Taussig)



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**Margareta Pavaloi** (Völkerkundemuseum VPST, Heidelberg)  
*Victor Goldschmidt – The Collection of a Scholar*

Some of the Chinese objects on show in the exhibition “Dust & Silk” are part of the ethnographic collections brought together by Victor Goldschmidt for the von Portheim Foundation of Science and the Arts, which he had established in 1919. The presentation deals briefly with the specific aims and scientific questions which guided Goldschmidt’s interest in objects. Both are of central importance for Goldschmidt’s concept of collecting and thus for the history of objects in the collections of the foundation’s Ethnographic Museum.

**Gabriele Anderl** (Wien)  
*Provenance Unknown: The East Asian Collection of Anton and Walter Exner*

Anton Exner was the best-known Viennese art dealer specialising in artefacts from East Asia during the interwar period. He and his son Walter Exner also built up the most important Austrian private collection of items from this region. The majority of the collection finally ended up in two Viennese museums: the Museum of Applied Arts (MAK) and the Weltmuseum Wien. These collections were the subject of provenance research under the Austrian Art Restitution Act. The aim was to identify objects that had possibly been seized during or as a result of Nazi rule. It is thought that the majority of the collection was acquired during journeys by Anton and Walter Exner to Asia and that only a smaller part came from acquisitions in Western countries. But precisely this smaller part would have been of particular interest, as problematic acquisitions during the Nazi era could not be ruled out, especially because Anton and Walter Exner had been fanatical Nazis. Conversely, all the objects that they had provably and directly acquired in Asia could be classified as “unobjectionable” in the meaning of the Art Restitution Act. But this seemingly simple scheme proved to be of little help in practice, because there is not a single object with a clear indication of provenance. Moreover, this approach would hardly have yielded any insights with regard to the circumstances under which the Exners acquired these artefacts in Asia. These questions are gaining in importance, however, in the growing debate on colonial looted property in public collections.

**Niklas Leverenz** (Hamburg)  
*Fragments of the Painting The Battle of Qurman of 1760*

In three wars between 1755 and 1760, Chinese troops were able to subdue a territory in Central Asia that included large areas of what is now the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The Qianlong emperor (r. 1736–95) glorified his conquests of the north-western borders of Qing dynasty (1644–1911), a region in Europe most frequently called East Turkestan, with various works of arts. In 1760, the Qianlong emperor ordered the creation of 16 large-scale paintings (each about 8 × 4 metres) to glorify his victories. Preparation had already begun during the campaigns, when artists were sent to the front to make sketches of key events. The 16 battle paintings were created collaboratively by court artists and European missionary artists. Smaller versions of these paintings were sent to Paris in 1765 to have them engraved in copper. Only three fragments of the 16 paintings have survived, all of them of the painting The Battle of Qurman, which took place on February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1759, close to the city of Yarkand (at the western end of the Tarim basin).

**Bettina Zorn** (Weltmuseum Wien)  
*The Battle Copper Engravings in the Weltmuseum Wien’s Collection and their Historical Embeddedness*

Over time more and more details are becoming known about historical and technical facts concerning the battle engravings dating to the Qianlong period (1736–1796), so that we are able to reconstruct the context. Nevertheless, questions about the provenance of the collection and technical details pose a challenge. The paper aims to trace what is known so far.

**Jana C. Reimer** (Museum am Rothenbaum (MARKK), Hamburg)  
*What we know and what we don’t know: circumstantial information on a fragmented collection and its fragmentary history*

The MARKK holds two collections documenting nomadic life in the Semipalatinsk region, Kazakhstan, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1906, the Hamburg ethnological dealer J.F.G. Umlauff sold an extensively furnished yurt to the museum as a display object, and in 1908 a photo collection by the St. Petersburg ethnographer Samuil Dudin is registered. There is no connection in regard to their exact origin and their acquisition, but a coincidental contextual connection arises within the collection. Within the museum’s holdings, both collections document an early period of nomadic material culture in Central Asia.

**Sophia Abplanalp** (Vienna)  
*Travelling Tiles – Ilkhanid Lustre Tiles from the Shrine of the Imamzada Yahya in Varamin*

From the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century European travellers made their way to Iran for different reasons, including the establishment of trading relations, research purposes or diplomatic missions. Parallel to this, Europeans started developing an interest in historic sites in Iran that were thought to be of archaeological significance, such as the ruins of Samarra or Ray. Accordingly, written accounts on medieval Iranian lustre ceramics started to appear in European travelogues. Since then, lustre tiles have been admired in the West for their distinctive aesthetics, which they owe to their lustre glaze. The craze for Iranian lustre ware began to emerge during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and peaked around the turn of the century, creating a high demand for these objects. The Western art market and European collections of Islamic art were stocking up on Iranian lustreware. Hence hundreds of lustre tiles were removed from the walls of medieval religious buildings in Iran, including mosques and shrines. As a result, nowadays lustre tiles from Ilkhanid Iran are dispersed all over the world and can be found in every major museum collection of Islamic art, including the MAK and Weltmuseum in Vienna. The diverse trading routes of medieval lustre tiles should be exemplified by the example of the shrine of the Imamzada Yahya in Varamin, which was plundered of its lustre tiles between the 1880s and 1930s,

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**Tobias Mörike** (Weltmuseum Wien)

*Layered Vision: Central Asian Architectural Fragments in European Collections*

Mosques, shrines and mausoleums in Central Asia underwent significant transformations from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Archaeologists and travellers broke up individual tiles and ceramic fragments, transferred them to Europe and exhibited them there. Art historians produced visual documentation to catalogue and identify buildings while architects and conservators renovated the architectural sites in Samarqand and Bukhara. The talk aims at combining the layers of intervention and documentation for producing a history of knowledge and representation by elaborating on European conceptions of the Silk Road as the dislocation and appropriation of Central Asia's pasts.

**Barbara Karl** (Bern, Vienna)

*Exchanges of Taste: Textiles and Concepts of Power on the Maritime "Silk Road" c. 1600 – The Spanish Cape*

In addition to the various Silk Roads trading luxuries and everyday goods within the Eurasian continent, the maritime trade routes crossing the Indian Ocean and beyond have been important since antiquity. This paper focuses on the textile trade between India and the Iberian Peninsula c. 1600. The earliest gifts and loot obtained by the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean included embroidered textiles from Bengal. What started out as high level diplomatic gift and desirable booty turned into a sought-after trade item of everyday elite use in the Portuguese colonies. By the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, Bengal silk embroideries had become exclusive exotic souvenirs to Europe, as the presence of these textiles in late 16<sup>th</sup> century aristocratic inventories in different parts of Europe attest. They entered not only the households of the Portuguese upper class but also played a part in the network of dynastic gift-giving and ended up in the famous collections of the Habsburg and Medici princes. We take a particular look at a piece of costume produced in Bengal for the Iberian market, the Spanish cape.

**Alexey Ulko** (Tashkent, Uzbekistan)

*Censorship in Central Asian Contemporary Art in a Time of Hybrid War*

The Central Asian contemporary art scene has inherited different practices of censorship from the Soviet Union as well as from more conservative social groups on both sides of the political spectrum. In this paper, I will discuss a range of recent examples of censorship specific to different cultural and national contexts in order to highlight the complex relations between the artist and society. I will interpret these relations in the context of the current hybrid war being waged by many different actors globally as well as locally.

**Kerstin Klenke** (Phonogrammarchiv of the Austrian Academy of Sciences)

*Sonic Statecrafting: The Near, the Far and the Impossible in Uzbekistani Estrada*

This talk is devoted to the intersection between popular music and state politics in Uzbekistan. I look at the remarkable era from 2001 onwards, when the Uzbekistani government promoted a rather unlikely candidate to the prominent position of state sound: estrada, a genre of popular music and a musical relic of socialism. Under president Islom Karimov, various state institutions were entrusted with estrada's development

and control, and the creation of milliy estrada – national estrada – as sonic incarnation of national independence ideology was put high on the agenda of government policies. But how could and should Uzbekistani estrada be made national, considering its internationalist Soviet legacy? Exploring this question, I will also scrutinize the conventional celebratory rhetoric of newly dissolved borders, limitless flows and unleashed creativity in the post-Soviet cultural realm – asking, whether the world did not actually become a smaller place for Uzbekistani estrada after independence.