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The Ackland Art Museum Appoints New Curator for Asian Art, Ellen Huang

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The Ackland Art Museum at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill today announced the appointment of **Ellen C. Huang** as Curator for Asian Art. Huang is a historian of art, technology, and material culture, who researches across the physical sciences and humanities. Starting Dec. 2, Huang will be responsible for organizing and overseeing exhibitions, conducting research and producing publications, and cultivating curricular and public engagement, all within the context of a global public research university.

“I am honored and delighted to be joining the Ackland, and I look forward to working with the energetic staff, boards, and university colleagues to deepen understanding and appreciation of art from Asia. Not only is the University renowned for its active and ambitious program in Asian studies, but the Ackland’s distinguished and growing collection is also a tremendous springboard for research, education, and outreach. I am interested in the confluence between the industrial and artisanal production of art, and I am keen to explore the ways such stories may be expressed through innovative programming and exhibitions at the Ackland Art Museum. I am particularly attracted by North Carolina’s rich heritage in clay and kilns, which can connect productively with my interest in ceramics on the world stage.”

Huang works to encourage learners to grow as empathetic, embodied actors in the world through object-based teaching. With degrees from Yale University and the University of California at San Diego, she has held postdoctoral teaching positions at the University of California, Berkeley, Stanford University, and the University of San Francisco. In addition to teaching and research she has curated Asian Art for the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University and private galleries in Taiwan and Hong Kong, and has worked with the collections at the San Francisco Asian Art Museum.

Committed to technical art history, the history of science, and object-based research and teaching, Huang has published widely on Chinese ceramics, notably the history and international reach of porcelain from the famous Jingdezhen kilns. Her broad interests also encompass contemporary Asian art. Her most recent large-scale project was the major Cantor Center exhibition and publication, "Ink Worlds: Contemporary Chinese painting from the Collection of Akiko Yamazaki and Jerry Yang."

"The Ackland could not be more delighted to be welcoming dynamic, engaging, and inventive scholar-curator Ellen Huang to our staff," said Director Katie Ziglar. "In the course of our international search that generated a very distinguished field of candidates, Ellen stood out by virtue of her passionate dedication to the potential of the material object to prompt all viewers, both specialist and novice, to 'look close, think far,' to cite the Ackland's motto. As the sole curatorial voice for Asian art at Stanford's Cantor Center for Visual Arts, she has organized thought-provoking and beautiful collection-based exhibitions, made significant acquisitions, and maintained an impressive network of international connections in Asia through conference participation, residential fellowships, and guest curating. We look forward to providing a platform for Ellen to build on these inspiring accomplishments as she takes on responsibility for the Ackland's engagement with Asian art."

Since the Ackland's founding in 1958, its Asian art collection has grown in quality and significance. From 1983 to 2008, the Ackland acquired and presented Asian art under the guidance of renowned Asian art connoisseur Sherman E. Lee, who spent his retirement years in Chapel Hill after a distinguished curatorial and academic career in Detroit, Seattle, and Cleveland. The Ackland has the only Asian art collection in North Carolina, which is also one of the strongest in the Southeastern United States, encompassing more than 1,200 works dating from 2,500 BCE to the present, including primarily works from Japan, China, and South and Southeast Asia. The collection's resonance is enhanced by active teaching and research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill by scholars in art history and in Asian studies.

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About the Ackland Art Museum: Featuring a year-round calendar of special exhibitions and dynamic public programs, the Ackland Art Museum on UNC-Chapel Hill's historic campus is a local museum with a global outlook that bridges campus and community. Admission to the Ackland is free and accessible to all. The Ackland's holdings include over 19,000 works of art. The collection spans a wide array of cultures and time periods, showcasing the breadth of human creativity. A vital teaching resource, the museum's mission is the art of understanding. Visitors can connect with the complexity and beauty of the wider world by getting close to art — the familiar, the unexpected, the challenging. The Ackland Art Museum is located at 101 South Columbia St. on the UNC Chapel Hill campus. Museum hours are Wednesday through Saturday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., and Sundays 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. The museum is open until 9 p.m. for Chapel Hill-Carrboro's monthly 2nd Friday ArtWalk. More information is available at ackland.org.

Photo courtesy of Ellen Huang