

ART HISTORY INSIGHTS

JANUARY 2020

The monthly newsletter that brings you selected articles of interest and opinion from the world of art history and visual culture. January celebrates Chinese New Year, so this month our focus is Chinese art and art history.

CHINESE ART HISTORY AS GLOBAL ART HISTORY

Western concepts have drastically shaped the history of Chinese art, but the artworks have their own stories to tell. Art historian, Wu Hung, explains how Enlightenment ideas underpin, and complicate, the long history of Chinese art. "In my talks, I deal with two kinds of materials, both of them historical," he says. "One is the real object, the visual material. The other materials are historical writings, ritual prescriptions, mythologies".

<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/wu-hung-mellon-lecture-excerpt-1526068>

NEW SCHOLARSHIP REVEALS THE PRIVATE LIVES OF CHINA'S EMPRESSES

Lavish paintings, robes and objets d'art tell new stories about China's Empresses. In 1903 an American woman painted a 15-foot-tall portrait of China's Empress Dowager Cixi, the last empress of the Qing dynasty. Why? And what did this mean?

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/new-scholarship-revealing-private-lives-chinas-empresses-180971958/>

THE FAMOUS FIVE

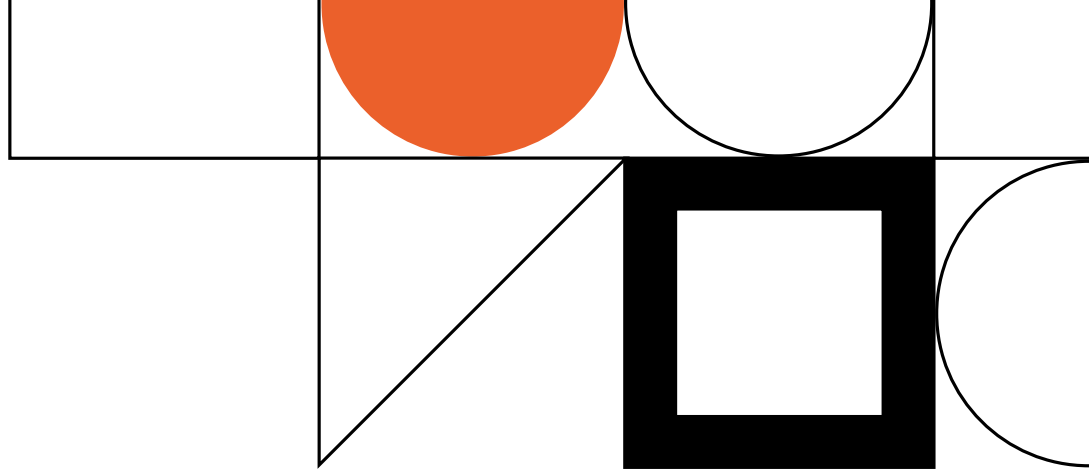
Five famous Chinese art works that you should know. From the 6th Century to the contemporary, explore Chinese art history through these iconic works. Including the 'Seated Buddha' (Yungang, Northern Wei Dynasty, ca. 460 C.E) and Xu Bing, 'Book from the Sky' (天书, ca. 1987-91).

<https://www.artsy.net/article/the-art-genome-project-five-famous-chinese-artworks-you-should-know>

CHINA'S GHOST MUSEUMS

China is undergoing the biggest museum building boom in history, but many of these new, architectural showpieces remain empty and unprogrammed. 'Museums in China are a distinctly modern intrigue...Museums and other cultural facilities are a big part of the identity creation and branding of China's new cities and districts. These are places without history, whose stories are just starting to be written'.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/wadeshepard/2019/06/20/why-china-has-hundreds-of-empty-ghost-museums/>



DOES ORIENTALISM PERSIST?

An astute review of the 'Art and China after 1989' exhibition from a couple of years ago which suggests that China's emergence onto the art world stage is eclipsed by persisting Orientalist ideas and Western modes of curation. The show, which opened at the Guggenheim Museum at the end of 2017 before moving to SFMOMA in 2018 continued to raise questions about how the predominantly white art world and white America view Chinese art and, by extension, China and Chinese people. Does Orientalism persist?

<https://hyperallergic.com/475446/art-and-china-after-1989-sfmoma/>

YOUR INSIGHTS

We promote a broad and inclusive art history, and look to engage with as wide an audience as possible. Please get in touch with articles you think may be of interest for newsletter. We welcome all content suggestions.

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