

The Center for Asian and African Studies at El Colegio de México
cordially invites you to the international symposium.

ART, WAR, AND REVOLUTION

LEE QOEDE AND THE GLOBAL CURRENTS OF MURALISM IN ASIA

AUGUST 20–22, 2025, MEXICO



Lee Qoede, *Self-Portrait with a Blue Outer Jacket*, 1948–1949
Oil on canvas, 28 × 23 in. (72 × 60 cm). © Courtesy of the Lee Qoede Estate.

ART, WAR, AND REVOLUTION

LEE QOEDE AND THE GLOBAL CURRENTS OF MURALISM IN ASIA

Art, War, and Revolution: Lee Qoede and the Global Currents of Muralism in Asia is an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural symposium that reexamines the life and work of Korean modernist Lee Qoede within the broader context of global mural movements. Join leading scholars, curators, and researchers as they share new insights and discoveries about the transnational artistic exchanges that shaped Asian art in the twentieth century. Each presenter will explore how Mexican muralism inspired artists across Asia and consider how the language of large-scale public art became a powerful tool for social change and cultural identity.

This symposium is organized by Jinyoung Anna Jin and Marisol Villela Balderrama, with support from the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (MCST) of South Korea and the Korea Arts Management Service (KAMS). It is co-organized by the Center for Asian and African Studies at the Colegio de México and Museo Kaluz.

The Center for Asian and African Studies, El Colegio de México (Colmex)

Located at El Colegio de México in Mexico City, the Center for Asian and African Studies (Centro de Estudios de Asia y África, CEAA) has been a preeminent institution for Asian studies in Latin America since its founding in 1964. CEAA offers the only graduate programs in Mexico dedicated exclusively to Asian studies, training master’s and doctoral students who deepen regional expertise and expand the scope of Asian studies across Latin America.

<https://www.colmex.mx/en/centros-de-estudios>

Centro Cultural Mexiquense Bicentenario, Museo de Texcoco

Located in San Miguel Coatlinchán, Texcoco, the **Centro Cultural Mexiquense Bicentenario** is a 17-hectare cultural hub in eastern State of Mexico, known for its striking architecture and multidisciplinary programming spanning concert halls, museums, and libraries. A highlight of the complex is the **Museo de Texcoco**, home to *We Will Win (Venceremos)*—a portable mural by Rina Lazo, a key figure in the Mexican muralism movement and longtime assistant to Diego Rivera, originally brought to North Korea in 1957.

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Museo Kaluz

Museo Kaluz is an institution dedicated to the study of Mexican painting and mural art. Its broad collection spans Mexico’s colonial period to the present day. Notably, it is the only museum in Latin America with a collection of Japanese painting and calligraphy.

<https://museokaluz.org/>

Day 1

Wednesday, August 20, 2025 | 5:00–7:00 PM CST
Museo Kaluz, Mexico City
In-person only

5:00–5:30 PM Welcome Remarks

5:30–7:00 PM Book Presentation of *Art, War, and Exile in Modern Korea: Rethinking the Life and Work of Lee Qoede*

Day 2

Thursday, August 21, 2025 | 10:00 AM–5:30 PM CST | 12:00–7:30 PM EST
Colegio de México, Mexico City
Hybrid (online and in-person): All presentations will be in English.

10:00–10:50 AM Opening, Meet & Greet
Amaury García, Professor, Center for Asian and African Studies, Colmex

Introduction by Symposium Organizers
Jinyoung Anna Jin, Director of Asian Art and Culture, Charles B. Wang Center, Stony Brook University
Marisol Villela Balderrama, Assistant Professor of Art History, Trinity University

11:00 AM–12:00 PM Influence of Mexican Mural Art on Asia Art

Kitagawa Tamiji (1894–1989): A Japanese Artist’s Mexican-Inspired Art Pedagogy
Bert Winther-Tamaki, Professor of Art History, University of California, Irvine

Siqueiros in China: The Spark That Ignited Chinese Artist Yuan Yunsheng’s Lifelong Mission
Dr. Zheng Shengtian, independent scholar

12:00–1:00 PM Q&A and Discussion
Moderated by Dr. Amaury García

1:00–2:30 PM Lunch Break

2:30–3:00 PM Keynote & Book Talk

Art, War, and Exile: Rethinking the Life and Work of Lee Qoede
Jinyoung Anna Jin, Director of Asian Art and Culture, Charles B. Wang Center, Stony Brook University

3:00–3:30 PM Mexican Muralism in a Global Context

Celebrating Socialism: The International Path of Muralist Rina Lazo
Marisol Villela Balderrama, Assistant Professor of Art History, Trinity University

3:30–4:00 PM Nationalism, universalism, and internationalism in mural painting
Renato González-Mello, Professor, Aesthetics Research Institute, National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)

4:00–4:30 PM Q&A, Discussion, and Book Signing

Day 3

Muralism and Cultural Diplomacy
Friday, August 22, 2025 | 10:00 AM–4:00 PM CST
Centro Cultural Mexiquense Bicentenario, Museo De Texcoco, Texcoco
In-person only

10:00 AM–12:00 PM Guided viewing of the collection at the Museo de Arte Moderno del Estado de México

1:00–2:00 PM In-depth analysis of Rina Lazo’s *We Will Win* (1957)

2:00–3:00 PM Discussion: New Research Directions, Opportunities for Future Collaboration

3:00–4:00 PM Closing Remarks and Farewell

Abstract and Speakers

Thursday, August 21, 2025, at 11:00 AM CST | 1:00 PM EST

Kitagawa Tamiji (1894-1989): A Japanese Artist’s Mexican-Inspired Art Pedagogy

The artist Kitagawa Tamiji spent fifteen years of his early career in Mexico (1921–1936), and for much of that time he was affiliated with the Open-Air Painting School Movement (Escuela de Pintura al Aire Libre, EPAL), first as a student, then a teacher, and finally the director of his own small school in Taxco. He was deeply moved by the lives and struggles of the poor rural indigenous children and adolescents he worked with in Mexico, while also betraying a patronizing view of their “primitive innocence.” They inspired him to devise an experimental art pedagogy that he tested and theorized during the rest of his artistic career in Japan.



Kitagawa Tamiji, *Portrait of the Artist*, 1931. Oil on cardboard. Kasama Nichido Museum of Art.



About the Speaker

Bert Winther-Tamaki is professor of art history at the University of California, Irvine. He has written three books on modern and contemporary Japanese art: *Art in the Encounter of Nations: Japanese and American Artists in the Early Postwar Years* (2001); *Maximum Embodiment: Yōga, the Western Painting of Japan, 1912–1955* (2012); and *Tsuchi: Earthy Materials in Contemporary Japanese Art* (2022). Winther-Tamaki curated a 2023 exhibition titled *Art and Ecology in Japan from the 1950s to the 1980s* at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo. His most recent publication is “An Appetite for Flames in the Japanese Art World During the 1980s” in *Archives of Asian Art* (Fall 2024).

**Siqueiros in China:
The Spark That Ignited Chinese Artist Yuan Yunsheng’s Lifelong Mission**

In 1956, a young student from Beijing’s Central Academy of Fine Arts attended an oil painting and print exhibition held by the Mexican National Front of Plastic Arts. He also personally listened to David Alfaro Siqueiros’s impassioned speech. This experience marked a turning point in the life and artistic career of Yuan Yunsheng. Over the following half-century, he not only created significant works of contemporary mural art but also devoted his life to reviving Chinese national culture and spirit, with the aim of reconstructing a culturally sovereign contemporary art education system in China.



Yuan Yunsheng, *Water-Sprinkling Festival: An Ode to Life* (detail), acrylic, mural, Beijing International Airport Terminal II, 1979. Courtesy of the artist.

About the Speaker

Shengtian Zheng is an artist, scholar, and curator based in Vancouver. He is the managing editor of *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, a research fellow at Simon Fraser University, and a trustee of Asia Art Archive in America. He was a professor and department chair at the China Academy of Art and a visiting professor at the University of Minnesota and San Diego State University. He was also a trustee and the adjunct director of the Institute of Asian Art, Vancouver Art Gallery. Dr. Zheng has organized and curated numerous exhibitions, including *Winds from Fusang: Mexico and China in 20th Century*. In 2024, his most recent books *Sino-Mexican Art and Cultural Exchanges in the Twentieth Century* and *Art and Modernism in Socialist China: Unexplored International Encounters 1949-1979* (as co-editor) were published. He received an honorary doctorate of letters from Emily Carr University of Art and Design in 2013.



**Art, War, and Exile: Rethinking the
Life and Work of Lee Qoede**

This presentation explores the overlooked transnational connection between Korean modern painter Lee Qoede (1913–1965) and the Mexican mural movement. While Lee is often discussed in the context of Korean art history and Cold War politics, his engagement with socially driven art and admiration for Mexican muralists—particularly Diego Rivera—has been largely ignored. Drawing from archival interviews and visual analysis, this talk repositions Lee not only as a nationalist painter but as a globally conscious artist shaped by international currents of revolution and resistance. It calls for a reevaluation of his work through the lens of transpacific artistic dialogue and solidarity.



Lee Qoede, *People IV*, 1948. Oil on canvas, 70 × 85 in. (177 x 216 cm). © Courtesy of the Lee Qoede Estate.



About the Speaker

Anna Jin, Ph.D., co-organizer of the symposium, is the director of Asian art and culture at Stony Brook University’s Charles B. Wang Center and the author of *Art, War, and Exile in Modern Korea: Rethinking the Life and Work of Lee Qoede* (Amsterdam University Press, 2025).

Her recent projects include the *Korean Art Alive* film series and exhibitions that bridge traditional and contemporary practices. Notable video essays include *Something Old, Something New, and Something Borrowed: Korean Bridal Robes* (2025), *Historical Mapping of Korea* (2025), *Hats Make the Korean Man* (2022), *From Privy to Patrimony: The Korean Chamber Pot* (2023), and *Chaekgeori: A Korean Curiosity Cabinet* (2022).

Jin holds a BA in art theory from Hongik University, an MA in art history from Columbia University, and a Ph.D. in cultural analysis and theory from Stony Brook University. She also serves on the community advisory board of PBS Thirteen/WLIW.

Celebrating Socialism: The International Path of Muralist Rina Lazo

Guatemalan-born muralist Rina Lazo (1923–2019) traveled and exhibited her work far beyond the Americas, venturing to Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and Asia. Her portable mural *Venceremos* (We Will Win, 1959)—which traveled together with the artist as a work-in-progress from Mexico to North Korea in 1957—exemplifies how Lazo’s artistic output during the 1950s was closely tied to her socialist ideals. In a decade when the modern Mexican muralist movement was losing strength at home due to Cold War cultural politics, international socialist networks such as the World Peace Council and the World Festival of Youth and Students allowed Lazo and other like-minded artists around the globe to configure an alternate circuit of cultural exchange and support not dominated by the United States.



Rina Lazo, *Venceremos* (We Will Win), 1959. Tempera on canvas, 2.3 × 3.3 m. Museo de Arte Moderno del Estado de México. © Rina Alegría García Lazo.

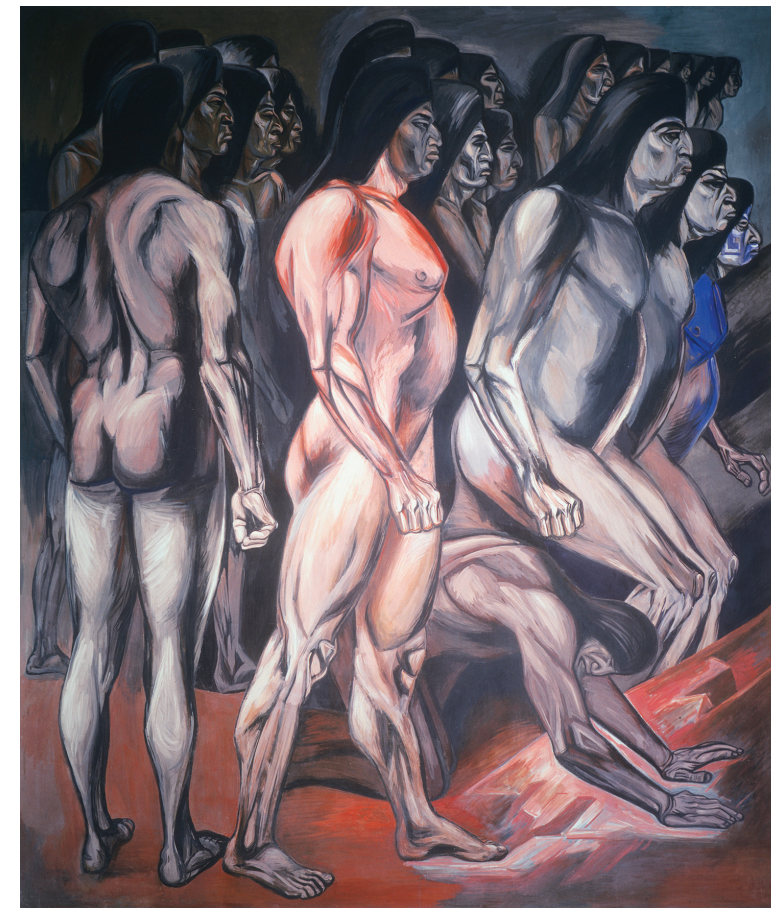
About the Speaker

Marisol Villela Balderrama, co-organizer of the symposium, is an assistant professor of art history at Trinity University. Her research focuses on artistic exchanges between East Asia and Latin America after World War II. She holds a PhD and MA in History of Art and Architecture from the University of Pittsburgh, an MA in art theory from the China Academy of Art, and a MA in contemporary art and visual culture from the Museo Reina Sofia, the Universidad Complutense, and the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Villela Balderrama has curatorial experience from the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, Spain, and has previously taught at the Tecnológico de Monterrey, the Wuhan University, the University of Pittsburgh, and Northwestern State University of Louisiana. Her book project, tentatively titled *Chasing Revolutions: José Venturelli’s Transpacific Murals and Prints*, examines the works of the Chilean artist in Chile, China, East Germany, and Cuba. Her article “Doves and Machetes: Rina Lazo’s Portable Mural *Venceremos* (1959) in Guatemala, North Korea, and Beyond” received the 2024 Association of Latin American Art Article Award.



Nationalism, universalism, and internationalism in mural painting

The presentation examines 20th-century Mexican painting through three interrelated frameworks: **nationalism**, rooted in Mexico’s long 19th-century liberal tradition and the legacy of the Mexican Revolution; **universalism**, associated not only with art-for-art’s-sake movements but also with interwar “universal culture” projects emerging from metropolitan centers; and various forms of **revolutionary thought**, which navigated the tensions between the formation of new nation-states and a rapidly shifting international landscape shaped by two world wars and a prolonged decolonization process. The talk will highlight artworks that reflect acts of resistance and subversion—though at times shaped by the lingering prejudices and stereotypes of colonial ideologies.



José Clemente Orozco, *The Epic American Civilization: Migration* (Panel 1), 1932–1934.



About the Speaker

Renato González-Mello studied history and obtained a doctorate in art history from the School of Philosophy and Letters, National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Since 1992 he has been a researcher at the Institute of Aesthetic Research, UNAM, where he studies modern Mexican painting, particularly mural painting and the work of José Clemente Orozco. He has published several works on political iconography in Mexico in the 20th century, the relationships between architecture and education, and the material analysis of the arts. His recent research includes studies of violent images and the topic of systematic cataloging of Mexico’s heritage.

Among his most significant publications are *The Painting Machine: Rivera, Orozco, and the Invention of a Language* (2008); *José Clemente Orozco in the United States* (2002, with Diane Miliotes); *Channel the Gaze: Architecture, Pedagogy, and Images in Mexico, 1920–1950* (2010, with Deborah Dorotinsky); *Vanguard in Mexico, 1915–1940* (2013, with Anthony Michael Stanton); and *Paint the Revolution: Mexican Modern Art, 1910–1950* (2016, with Matthew Affron, Mark Castro, and Dafne Cruz). He has been a professor at the School of Philosophy and Letters of the UNAM since 1991 and has been a visiting professor at the Universidad Veracruzana, the Autonomous University of San Luis Potosí, the Universidad Iberoamericana, the Colegio de México, and Columbia University.



About the Moderator

Amaury A. García Rodríguez is professor at the Center for Asian and African Studies at the Colegio de México. He received his PhD in Japanese studies from El Colegio de México and his BA in art history from the University of Havana, Cuba, in 1995. His research centers on the historiography of Japanese art and its material and visual culture during the early modern and modern periods. He also explores the trading and collecting of Japanese art in Latin America.

García Rodríguez is the author of *The Control of the Japanese Shunga Prints* (2011) and *Popular Culture and the Prints in Japan* (2005), as well as co-editor of *Visuality in Japan: Eleven Iberoamerican Essays* (2009), all published in Spanish, as well as numerous articles and essays in academic journals and books. He has received the National Prize from the Mexican Academy of Science for the best Ph.D. dissertation in humanities (2008) as well as the Japan Foreign Minister’s Commendation for his work on behalf of Japan–Mexico cultural and artistic relations (2019). He was formerly the director of the Center for Asian and African Studies at the Colegio de México. Currently, he is a professor at the Colegio de México and the coordinator for the Terry Welch Initiative for the Study of Japanese Art.

