



Friday Seminar

Haute Couture and Fashionable Beverages: Dark History, Changing Trends, and Luxury Consumption in East Asia

Oct 20 | 12:45 – 2:15 PM | NAH114

The Hollywood romantic comedy *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) sheds light on the lifestyle of the ultra-wealthy in Singapore and captures haute couture and culinary trends from an East Asian perspective. The film has helped extend academic, journalistic, and popular discussions of the super-rich, in a way not extensively considered in previous studies of the elites of East Asia. This chapter unpacks the idea of fashionability in three fundamental ways. First, it examines the way historical trade in luxury fashion goods that had resulted in wars, conflicts, and cultural destruction became unfashionable. Second, the chapter shows how the production and consumption of fashionable items and fashionable (alcoholic) beverages as well as drinking styles and drinking preferences have come to represent ideas of civilisation, economic progress, and modernity. Third, it argues that the consumption of fashionable clothing and furnishing and the adoption of fashionable styles of drinking are empowering because the adoption of these fashions is open to different cultural interpretations by different socioeconomic groups. This chapter highlights how the global design and production of luxury beverages, fashion, and related industries are currently influenced by East Asia.



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