



香港大學  
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG



## **Modernism between Past and Future**

The Third International Conference of the Modernist Studies in Asia Network (MSIA)

**31 May – 2 June 2024**

*The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong*

Keynote Speakers:

Jed Esty (The University of Pennsylvania)  
Christopher Bush (Northwestern University)

Roundtable Speakers from Various Locations

### **Call for Papers**

Modernism is often characterized by an acute sense of a break from the past, yet the shadow of the past also haunts its imaginings of futurity. For Constance Chatterley, living “among the ruins” doesn’t preclude the human endeavor to “build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes,” though “there is now no smooth road into the future.” Leopold Bloom, too, finds himself at the interstices between “the irreparability of the past” and “the imprevidibility of the future.” If the mixing of “memory and desire,” as Eliot depicts it, engenders an insidious form of cruelty, it also captures modernism inhabiting what Hannah Arendt calls “an interval in time which is altogether determined by things that are no longer and by things that are not yet.” Such intervals, for Arendt, transform freedom in a public sense. Thinking in interdisciplinary terms, we ask: how does Modernism locate a space where past and future become entangled, where remembrance and anticipation are summoned to reconceptualize their significance?

Furthermore, the continued growth of scale—spatiotemporally, archivally, and textually—in modernist studies at once paves the way and makes demands for understanding the complexities of cultural and intellectual history across geographical boundaries. It also calls for a renewal of attention to narrative, aesthetic, and critical practices that vitally strengthen or disrupt connections between the past, the present, and the future.

This conference invites paper and panel proposals that explore modernism’s retrospective and prospective moments, themes, and practices. In what ways is modernism related to or disconnected from specific intellectual and living traditions? How do modernism’s revolt against and reconfiguration of the legacy of the past bear upon its transcultural reception, adaptation, and evaluation? And how might a retrospective or prospective emphasis contribute to or complicate the development of global modernist studies? We welcome papers that focus on textual analysis, cultural studies, historiographical discussions, theoretical and methodological reflections, as well as



香港大學  
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG



interdisciplinary work on art, cinema, theater, and other cultural products.

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ (Re)invention, evolution, and circulation of ideas of modernism
- ◆ Precursors, sources, legacies or afterlives of modernism
- ◆ Global modernism and Asia
- ◆ Tradition, innovation, and modernist aesthetics
- ◆ History, memory, experience, autobiography, life-writing
- ◆ Fragmentation, rupture, continuity, and resonance
- ◆ Translation, appropriation, adaptation, communication
- ◆ Nostalgia, imagination, and fantasy
- ◆ Modernist affect and emotion
- ◆ Modernism and utopian thinking
- ◆ Prophecy, futurology, science, technology
- ◆ Risk, adventure, and speculation
- ◆ Reform and revolution
- ◆ Empire and imperialism: old and new
- ◆ War, violence, catastrophe, trauma
- ◆ Decline, decay, degeneration, development, regeneration, redemption
- ◆ Modernism, pedagogy, and the future of the humanities

Please send proposals of approximately 250–300 words for individual papers, or 500–600 words for panels, together with short bios, to [msia2024@hku.hk](mailto:msia2024@hku.hk) by **January 15, 2024**. Participants will be notified in February, 2024.

Conference Organizers:

Nan Zhang  
Tong King Lee  
Nicholas Y. H. Wong  
Vivien, Yan Wei

For further information about MSIA, please visit our website:  
<https://www.modernismasia.hku.hk/>