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# **Project Museum: Private and Public Collecting of Non-European Objects in the Early 20th Century**

**22–24 April 2026, Ljubljana, Slovenia**

Venue: Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Metelkova ulica 2, Ljubljana

In the first half of the 20th century, Europe experienced a boom in collecting practices that blurred the lines between private enthusiasm and public exhibition. Individuals—travelers, missionaries, scholars, entrepreneurs—assembled collections of non-European objects, which they often presented as “museums.” These reflected personal visions, self-assertion, or claims to authority in the cultural sphere. At the same time, numerous public institutions, as well as the Catholic Church and other missionary organizations, began establishing non-European collections and integrating them into broader institutional and ideological frameworks.

The Museum Project symposium aims to explore these intertwined practices of collecting, interpreting, and exhibiting. With a focus on the shifting relationships between the private and public spheres, it invites reflection on how objects circulated through domestic interiors, church environments, and emerging museums. The aim is to explore how questions of authorship, authority, knowledge transfer, and representation shaped the collecting landscape in the early 20th century and how these collections—temporary or permanent—contributed to the idea of the museum as a cultural project.



### Wednesday, 22 April

**9:00–9:30**    **Registration**

**9:30–9:45**    **Welcome address**

**9:45–12:00**    **Panel 1**

**Ariane Da Cunha:** Orientalist décor or more? Displaying Chinese decorative textiles in French and Belgian museums at the turn of the 20th century

**Roxanna Maas and Marit Feld:** Between museum and gallery practices: The Early Exhibitions of the Dutch Asian Art Society (double presentation)

**Valerie Jurgens:** The Karlbeck Syndicate (1930–1935): contextualising the early Chinese private and public collections in Europe

**Dinara Dubrovskaya:** Lang Shining (Giuseppe Castiglione; 郎世寧; 1688–1766)'s Scrolls, Donated to the State Museum of Oriental Art in Moscow by Vladimir S. Kalabushkin: History of Collection and Problems of Attribution

**12:00–13:30**    Lunch break

**13:30–15:30**    **Panel 2**

**Natalia V. Safonova :** The Art of Turkestan and the „Muslim East“ in Museum Exhibitions of the Russian Empire

**Azam Soheilipour:** Cultural vow in book collecting and the formation of manuscript libraries in Iran

**Jindřich Mleziva:** Non-European collection in the regional museum – the case of the West Bohemian Museum in Pilsen

**Wang Hao:** Mapping the Ethnographic and Religious Activities of Peter Baptist Turk in Early 20th-Century Eastern Hubei

**15:30–16:00**    Coffee break

**16:00–18:00**    **Panel 3**

**Jiří Honzl:** Dilettante collectors, or not? A set of pottery lamps from the Hellmuth collection of Egyptian antiquities

**Jan Šejbl:** „I cannot conceive of living otherwise than in my chambers, adorned with the whole of my illustrious inheritance.“ A lifelong collector Joe Hloucha

**Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik:** Collecting Chinese Art in Early 20th-Century Beijing: the Case of Ivan Skušek Jr.

**Klara Hrvatin:** Before it became public: the Skušek collection and its 1956 unofficial guest book

**18:00–20:00**    **Welcome reception**



### Thursday, 23 April

**8:40–9:00 Registration**

**9:00–11:00 Panel 4**

**Kevin Lam:** Translating the Museum: Text, Image, and the Construction of the Museum in Late Qing China

**Elaigha Vilaysane:** From the Tomb to the Museum Plinth: Chinese Burial Objects on Display in the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art

**Dong Xinyu (Maya):** Palimpsests of Devotion: The Fragmented Afterlives of the Guangshengsi Murals in Early 20th Century Collecting Practices

**Camille Bertrand:** Edward Goldstein (1844–1920) and the Cernuschi Museum in Paris (1904–1908)

**11:00–12:30 Guided tour of the exhibition »Asia in the Heart of Ljubljana«, Slovene Ethnographic Museum**

12:30–14:00 Lunch break

**14:00–16:00 Panel 5**

**Tomoë I. M. Steineck:** Mission, Museum, Empire: A Swiss Protestant Collection of Japanese Religious Images and the Unmaking of Comparative Religion, c. 1880–1920

**Davor Mlinarič:** From the Altar to the Storage Room: The Fate of Church and Monastic Collections and Their Transformation into Museum Collections in the Celje Region (1938–1958)

**Helena Motoh:** Curating the experience: „Multimedia“ in the Early 20th Century Missionary Exhibitions

**Tina Berdajs:** Interpreting China: an Analysis of Missionary Turk's Object Labels

16:00–16:30 Coffee break

**16:30–18:00 Panel 6**

**Freya Terryn:** Curating Japanese Illustrated Books Abroad: Art-Historical Frameworks and the Japanese Donation to the University of Louvain

**Antonio De Caro:** Chinese Catholic Waves: Collecting Chinese Catholic Art in Private Collections

**Stella Zhivkova:** Memory Loss of an Ukiyo-e Collection: Attempts at Reconstructing Provenance of P.M Montani's Album of Woodblock Prints

**18:00–19:00 Publications presentation**



### Friday, 24 April

**9:00-11:00** Guided tour of Ljubljana (meeting place: [Prešeren square, in front of the monument](#))

**11:00-13:00** Panel 7

**Tajana Ujčić and Katarina Marić:** The Hütterott Family Collection: From Trieste and Rovinj to the Public Sphere

**Qiu Yifan:** Collecting, Displaying, and Creating a New Taste for Chinese Art from Eumorfopoulos' Private Museum to Public Museums, 1908 to 1934

**Zlatka Dimitrova:** From Private Ownership to National Heritage: The Early 20th-Century Ukiyo-e Collection of NAIM-BAS

**Michaela Pejcochova:** Private collections becoming public: Oriental Institute in Prague in the 1930s and the quest for a state collection of Asian art

13:00-14:30 Lunch break

**14:30-16:30** Panel 8: Archives, Media,  
and Visual Sources

**Alenka Pipan Mubi and Marko Frelj:** The Role of Print Media and Archives in Research on Missionary Collections in Slovenia

**Chikako Shigemori Bučar:** From a Piece of Postcard to a Lost History and Reconstructed Biographies

**Bojan Šibenik:** Photographic Legacy: Analysis and Interpretation

**Marko Frelj:** Interpreting the Use of Objects from Missionary Collections through Pictorial and Photographic Sources

16:30-17:00 Coffee break

**17:00-17:15** Closing remarks