

Einladung zum Gastvortrag

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Art and Female Rulership in China

Dienstag, 28. November 2023, 18–20 Uhr c.t.

Online via Webex

Meeting-Link: <https://fu-berlin.webex.com/fu-berlin/j.php?MTID=m557b16c03727593ad7c7c7d120e3d9ff>

Meeting-Kennnummer: 2786 053 2553 | Passwort: wgVwap6C335

Exerting a wide range of diverse historical sources and visual materials, this interdisciplinary study pieces together a lost history of female creativity by recounting the oft-hidden but critical role imperial women assumed as patrons, collectors, tastemakers, and artists in imperial China. Their artful legacy, though often fragmented and edited, is compelling and evident from temple building, sculpture making, and capital planning to the arts of writing and painting, or in other words every aspect of art production. This gendered mode of expression, resonating the utmost celebration of feminine virtue, the “way of water,” in Daoist philosophy provided a lasting model for the conveyance of Chinese women’s culture.



Water, the embodiment of *yin* femininity that complements *yang* masculinity, has been the most enduring element of Chinese cosmological thought since the *Book of Changes*. It is the metaphor of the supreme *yin* in Laozi’s *Daode jing*, venerated as the highest good, close to the Way or Dao. Water’s pliable nature, however, belies its true power. Water not only signifies the ultimate female image but the powerful presence of Chinese imperial women.

Hui-shu Lee is Professor of Art History at UCLA. She received her doctorate degree from Yale University in 1994 after first studying at National Taiwan University and working in the National Palace Museum. Her field of specialization is Chinese painting and visual culture in the pre-modern era, with a particular focus on gender issues. She also works extensively on representations of place, cultural mapping, and gardens. Among her publications are *Exquisite Moments: West Lake & Southern Song Art* (New York: China Institute, 2001) and *Empresses, Art, and Agency in Song Dynasty China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010). She is currently completing a book titled *Picturing West Lake: the Poetics and Representation of An Iconic Place*.