Chilean Asian Studies on Art: Subject, Museum, and Collecting

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Literature is that which constitutes the outside of any work; that which underlies all written language and leaves on any text the empty mark of a rubric.

Michel Foucault

What is the experience of living as a consciousness among things? Human beings are constantly drifting apart from the present, and it is in that disengagement under which they are returned repeatedly onto themselves.

Sergio Rojas

Abstract

The following article seeks to inquire further into the rules of formation upon which Asia—or that which is considered Asian—is represented in Art, and particularly, in Chilean museal collections. In this delimitation, the Museum is described as a regime of subjectivation of the experience of otherness. Starting from this working thesis and distancing the matter from the category of Asian Studies—if understood as a network of objectifying enunciations on Asia emerging from academia and the state—the museum’s regime is conceptualized as the place of production of a universal subject that is linked to otherness from the perspective of sameness. Our investigation argues that museum subjectification is defined by the experience of that which is real (objects) as both text and context: in other words, curatorial documents. At its core, the present article proposes an alternate manner in which to approach Asian objects—both material and cultural—from the second half of the nineteenth century outside of the Museum’s regime (and museal studies) in Chile, focusing the interest of study particularly on Asian Collecting.

Keywords: museal studies, art theory, Asian Studies, Asian collecting, collections, transculturality

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Čilske azijske raziskave o umetnosti: predmet, muzej in zbirateljstvo

Izvleček


Ključne besede: muzeološke študije, teorija umetnosti, azijske študije, azijsko zbirateljstvo, zbirke, transkulturnost

Introduction

Studies on the Asian phenomenon emerged strongly in Chile in the second half of the 20th century. This is mainly due to an effort to describe and give continuity to the conditions for the objectification of Asia as a region of projection for the Chilean state (Calvo 2017, 5). As such, most analyses regarding Asia in Chile’s contemporary history have mainly centred on its displacement of intelligibility (how it is thought) and its recurrence in certain fields (from where it is thought): Then, Asia would not simply portray a unitary, immobile, and exhaustive geographical or cultural zone, but the upgradable irruption of a particular object—that which is Asian—within a set of fields of knowledge, in the sense of the disposition of a contingency.

Asia, as interpreted by orientalist discourses and imaginaries (Blanco 2003, 172; Smith 2006, 369; Baros 2011, 4), traveller’s chronicles and testimonies (Suberca-seaux 2001, 365; Ramírez 2010, 3), irruptions of religious crises and local secularization processes (Ramírez 2017, 151), commercial regionalisms (Aratza 2012, 713; Prieto and Ladino 2016, 252; Legler, Garelli-Ríos and González 2018, 149) or forms of economic integration and globalization (Armanet 1992, 41; Rodríguez 2006, 59; Ross 2007, 112; Toloza 2014, 14) are only mosaics in which that which is “Asian” is—through historical-disciplinary accounts—discovered and given to thought by both academia and the state.
The production of aspects of Asia, through the historical desirability it had for the Chilean state—and which have been collected in the academic tradition—constitutes a complex network of discourses and rules of enunciation, i.e., the category of Asian Studies in Chile (Maire 2021, 128).

On first careful reading it may be noticed that Asian Studies do not organize a balanced series of desirability about Asia, nor a fully articulated or absolute speech. Rather, this enunciative corpus designates a dislocation—or dispersion—of Asia into heterogeneous and, to some extent, mutually exclusive or opposing strata of interest and attention. Nowadays, the general decibility, or that which can be said or explained, of Asian Studies in Chile is mainly based on the fields of Economics and Political Science (Geopolitics and International Relations) (Maire 2021, 132). These areas do not define or prescribe the total field of development of Asian Studies in Chile on either an academic level or of the interest to the state they represent—that is, what they are—but rather they convey the predominant degrees of accentuation—and help glimpse the margins—in the processes of formation of the Asian object. That is, when there would exist something like an “Asian Study” and from what laws it sprung forth (Foucault 2017a, 55).

As a starting point: the attention on Asia has been, for the most part, on its construction as an object of study (Asia deployed as the object), something that is given to thought within certain disciplinary fields and, therefore, is distinguished from the very particular description of relations, properties, and forms of occurrence within knowledge.

Main Problematic: Asia can also be breached as the instance of a subjectivation, where the Asian poses the formalization of a type of historical subject, determined by specific rationality on knowing (Foucault 1988, 4). One of the places in which society has developed a rationality—a subjectivity or, in other words, a way of thinking—about that which is Asian, is the Museum.

The purpose of the following article is to characterize how the Museum is subjectivized in relation to Asian collections of the second half of the 19th century in Chile; to describe what rules configure a subject that experiences the Asian on the plane of a regime of museal pieces of knowledge (Lyotard 2019, 41). This paper also aims to differentiate the Museum as a place of subjectification of Asia, from the forms of objectification that Asian Studies have experienced both from academia and the state.

The main thesis that this article sets out to defend is that there is no such a thing as Asian Studies in the field of the Museum when thought of as an objectification of Asia itself (a problem distinguishable in disciplinary or state interest). On the
contrary, for the Museum the problem of Asia lies in conceiving a universal subjectivity that appropriates the Asian as a sameness.

Finally, this paper offers a route for opening “the Asian” from the Museum regime towards the collector. This work is based on the axes of Transdisciplinarity, Philosophy, Museum Studies, and Transculturality.

Asian Studies as a Place of Asian Objectivation

Asian Studies, whether in its acceptance as an academic genre, a type of literature, or a site of splicing of enunciations on Asia emanated from the Chilean state, is defined by its ability to give a necessary appearance—a necessity—to an object of study. At the risk of stating something obvious, Asian Studies is defined by its object and the validity of the decibility that is poured and oriented on it.

The category of Asian Studies in Chile assumes, minimally, the occurrence of three acts of objectification: a) the degree of desirability of Asia; b) that its object of production (the Asian) always possesses something improper, that is to say, that it lies outside the presently decipherable and, therefore, is the discovery of a new enunciative threshold; c) that, despite the latter, the object Asia is not a purely unprecedented event of thought, without a minimum inscription in an already existing speech, for:

One cannot speak of anything at any time; it is not easy to say something new [...] the object does not wait in limbo the order that will liberate it [...] it does not pre-exist itself [...] It exists in the positive conditions of a complex set of relations. (Foucault 2017a, 63)

This armature—the surface in which the object Asia emerges—must be accommodated, in turn, on a new and double requirement: on the one hand, enforcing discursive principles of the disciplinary fields in which it is situated, in relation to a “truth” (to place the decibility of Asia in the disciplinary truth); on the other, to provoke an epistemic opening, by virtue of the fact that a “new object calls for new conceptual tools and new theoretical foundations” (Foucault 2015, 37).2

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1 “No se puede hablar en cualquier época de cualquier cosa; no es fácil decir algo nuevo [...] el objeto no aguarda en los limbo el orden que va a liberarlo [...] no se preexiste a sí mismo [...] Existe en las condiciones positivas de un complejo haz de relaciones.” (Foucault 2011a, 63)

2 “Un nuevo objeto pide nuevos instrumentos conceptuales y nuevos fundamentos teóricos.” (Foucault 2015, 37)
To enunciate something about Asia is to position it in thought as a distribution within the possibilities of a legitimized and reproducible speech. Thus, the fields of Economics or Political Science, we insist, are neither an ontologizing of Asia nor a margin of calibration of statements, propositions, and ideas; from these discursive systems or grids of specification (Foucault 2017a, 60), the object-Asia is placed in truth:

By truth, I do not refer to a species of general norms or propositions. By truth, I mean the whole of the procedures which allow at each moment and to each person to pronounce statements that will be considered as true. It doesn't have a superior, supreme instance. (Foucault 1994a, 407)

Moreover,

Truth is of this world; it is produced there thanks to multiple limitations. And it has established effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its “general policy” of truth: that is, the types of discourse that it welcomes and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances that make it possible to distinguish true or false statements, the way in which one sanctions the one and the other; the techniques and procedures that are valued to obtain the truth. (Foucault 1994c, 112)

Contingent speech about Asia is a delimitation, that allows “a discontinuous unity to constitute and unfold” (Holzapfel 2012, 16). As such, that which is uttered is a point of repetition and validation—and of prohibition and exclusion (ibid., 20)—within agreed thresholds, a state of mooring and intertwining between a will to know and the (historical) modalities that fields and discourses adopt in the production of a decibility. In the category of Asian Studies in Chile, the most important rule of putting Asia inside its truth is similarity.

3 "Par vérité, je n’entends pas une espèce de norme générale, une série de propositions. J’entends par vérité l’ensemble des procédures qui permettent à chaque instant et à chacun de prononcer des énoncés qui seront considérés comme vrais. Il n’y a absolument pas d’instance suprême." (Foucault 1994a, 407)

4 "La vérité est de ce monde; elle y est produite grâce à de multiples contraintes. Et elle y détient des effets régis de pouvoir. Chaque société a son régime de vérité, sa ‘politique générale’ de la vérité: c’est-à-dire les types de discours qu’elle accueille et fait fonctionner comme vrais; les mécanismes et les instances qui permettent de distinguer les énoncés vrais ou faux, la manière dont on sanctionne les uns et les autres; les techniques et les procédures qui sont valorisés pour l’obtention de la vérité.” (Foucault 1994c, 112)

5 “Una unidad discontinua se constituya y desenvuelva.” (Holzapfel 2012, 16)
Similarity expresses two meanings, directly associated with the desirability of Asia. First, similarity is the principle of translation and derivation of different phenomena on a plane of association. It is a question regarding the meaning of the meaning (Holzapfel 2005, 37). Similarity is the support of meaning, by which, for example, the Asian or state regional economic situation can be related to discipline as if it were a unique object, common and transferable to a local way of thinking: the thought put in truth expresses a closeness of language, through the different tactics of analysis, strategies of legibility and horizons of prescription that reformulate the frontiers and logics of meaning, as possibilities of linking the Asian and that which is ours. On that note, let’s read the following statement from an ECLAC study on Chilean economic policy on Asia:

Using the Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) model and the Global Trade Analysis Project (GTAP) database [emphasis is ours], this paper evaluates the trade liberalization effects of FTAs with both Japan and China, as well as the last four bilateral agreements with Asia. (Schuschny, Durán and de Miguel 2008, 7)

Similarity then breaks into the specific background that informs vocabulary, concepts, methods, descriptions, and points which control a particular enunciative circuit. That is to say, the commercial phenomenon is formalized as an exemplarity (Kuhn 2004), i.e., knowledge takes place where the rule or norm acquires legality as practice and effect on its object (Foucault 2017b, 30). Thus, we can posit that similarity articulates itself as a concomitance field over Asia:

These enunciates concern other very different domains of objects and belong to totally different types of discourse, but act among the statements studied, whether they serve as analogical confirmation, or serve as general principles and accepted premises for reasoning, or as models that can be transferred to other contents, or function as a higher instance with which to confront and to which at least some of the propositions that are asserted must be submitted. (Foucault 2017a, 78)

6 “Utilizando el modelo de Equilibrio General Computable (EGC) y la base de datos del Global Trade Analysis Project (GTAP) [énfasis es mío], este trabajo evalúa los efectos de la liberalización comercial de la suscripción de TLC tanto con Japón, como con China, así como de los cuatro últimos acuerdos bilaterales vigentes con Asia.” (Schuschny, Durán and de Miguel 2008, 7)

7 “Enunciados que conciernen a otros muy distintos dominios de objetos y que pertenecen a tipos de discurso totalmente diferentes, pero que actúan entre los enunciados estudiados, ya sirvan de confirmación analógica, ya sirvan de principio general y de premisas aceptadas para un razonamiento, ya sirvan de modelos que se pueden transferir a otros contenidos, o ya funcionen como instancia
In the second place, it can be stated that *similarity* is that which constitutes the archival micro-world of Chilean Asian Studies. It is inherent in the rules and conditions under which what is said is recorded, as the possibility of *continuing to be said*: “By archive I mean, in the first place, the mass of things said, preserved, valued, reused, repeated and transformed in a culture” (Foucault 1994a, 786). That is to say, *similarity* is the nucleus of a discursive practice that can be found in the Asian Studies category. The micro-world of archives belonging to Asian Studies does not simply equate to the sum of that which has (or has not) been said about Asia. Rather, it is composed of recurring historical forms that are matched by shared speech: citation regimes, bibliographic strategies, analysis or reference models, institutional spaces, a will of achieving rationality (Foucault 1994b, 284). Common patterns of speech become entwined and entangled as “knowledge”, in clear opposition to “not-knowledge” (Trias 2019), represented by everything outside this micro-world’s archival verification.

The Museum as a Subjectivation Space

This foreword was necessary due to the following: while Asian Studies in Chile have been *delineated* by rules and disciplinary areas of objectification, the Museum is an autonomous subjectivation space for Asia. By that, we mean that which is *given a necessary appearance* constitutes a mode of rationality which defines the experience of *that which is* Asian, based on principles of subjectivation of time-space, objects and their possible relations.

In other words, while Asian Studies wonder about *what* Asia is, the Museum asks itself what the conditions of possibility necessary for a subject to experience it are.

Dating back to the 19th century, the modern Museum is the institution that dealt with the proliferation of national and private collections resulting from European imperialism in Africa and Asia (Poulot 2005, 52; Duthie 2011, 17; Ocampo 2011, 85; Wintle 2013, 185). The modern Museum established a transcendental problem that, nowadays, is usually forgotten: the pretension of unity of a multiplicity, the incompatible, and that which is *foreign* (Podgorny 2010, 59; Lee 2021, 51).

At first glance, it could be posited that the individualization of the museum space, through disciplinary fields such as Museology and Museography, is the
expression of this kind of mandate on its extremely miscellaneous object. The museal space—as a matter of principle—circumscribes a regime of governance over material forms that were discontinued and redistributed by collecting.

The Museum is a surface *in media res*, with foreign objects, a place that establishes a network of enunciative relations, signs, descriptions, organizations, and the ways in which objects manifest themselves (Bennet 1995, 94; Padró 2003, 52). However, the Museum is not defined only by the distribution of a *museal-object*, that is, by the domain of its discovery or the analysis of its evidence. Overall, it is defined by *positivity* (Foucault, 2017a). The Museum’s *positivity is museality* (Hernández 2006, 199), which is at the same time both the condition of guarantee for the emergence of an enunciative field in the museal space and its rationale.

*Museality* brings forth at least three enunciative dimensions: a) the interweaving of multiple temporalities over a single space (thus gifting the Museum with a *heterotopic* characteristic in which time folds in over itself); b) a dispersion-insertion system, with respect to an object’s spheres of existence, coexistence, and contingency; c) the transformation—or revocation—of the *devices of the gaze* (the ideology of watching in which objects are invested and articulated within different visual traditions).

An example to synthesize what has been postulated: the Andrés Bello Archive of the University of Chile has a collection of *ukiyo-e* titled *Classical Japanese Prints Collection*. The collection, in turn, belongs to a larger, extremely dissimilar museum ensemble: the Iconographic Collection, which has watercolours, drawings and illustrations by travelling artists such as José del Pozo, Fernando Bambrilla and Juan Ravenet, engravings by the Chilean artist Nemesio Antúnez and illustrations from Claudio Gay’s *Atlas of the Physical and Political History of Chile*.

As such, it becomes imperative to ask the following question: Is it the Museum elaborating a kind of objectification of these Japanese pieces by placing them inside the iconographic as a place of enunciation? Or, on the contrary, is the iconographic an expression of the conditions of possibility of the subject who experiences the *Asian*?

This article considers that the second is more plausible. The end goal of *museality* is not to formulate a unitary mode of occurrence of the object—to define and govern it, based on its rules of analysis and conceptualization—but rather to produce a singular subject of the experience of the Museum’s *foreignness*.

The subject “Museum” is a universality whose need to exist finds its justification in the *limitation* of that which *foreign* (Holzapfel 2012, 21). This in the sense of an effect of the prohibition of the scattered, the discontinuous, the other, of that which
is different. Byung-Chul Han declared that “otherness” had disappeared; the other, the different, has been replaced by its negativity, the affirmation of sameness.

Such a reflection—anchored on the experience of the world’s alienness—can only come about with the emergence of a subjectivity which, rather than being totalitarian in character, is on the plane of the unlimited possibility of communication:

The Other as a secret, the Other as temptation, the Other as eros, the Other as desire, the Other as hell, and the Other as pain disappear. The negativity of the Other now gives way to the positivity of the Same [...] It is made sick not by denial and prohibition, but by over-communication and over-consumption. (Han 2019, 9)

The subject of the Museum is not the censorship of the truth of the object (What is that? What can—or cannot—be enunciated about it? And what validity can that which has already proliferated have?). Rather, it is its neutralization by a truth that precedes, and at the same time defines all experiences. Asia is neither an object nor a problem for the rationality of the Museum to take over: the underlying question is what kind of subject should experience that which is Asian, and according to what rules of formation is it configured as a legitimized decibility?

Asia, Orientalism, and the Museum

Following Han’s view, if otherness has disappeared as a force for the presentation of the foreign, neither should the Asian as a fact of museum representation exist. However, this would also imply that there are no such things as Asian collections in museums or curatorial themes associated with Asia. To defend this would be absurd. Rather, we argue the following: the Museum is a system that (re)produces equalizations (Han 2019, 23) in its pieces, where the original otherness of the objects—in temporal, cultural, geographic, visual, aesthetic, imagistic, formal, usage or other terms—is replaced by a sense of familiarity, becoming comparable, complicit, and translatable on a logic of community (Stoichita 2016, 20). This logic also serves as a basis for a subject that becomes accessible to certain analogies, and this question, as Jean-François Lyotard has pointed out (2019, 15), reveals a postmodern condition of knowledge.

9 “El otro como misterio, el otro como seducción, el otro como eros, el otro como deseo, el otro como infierno, el otro como dolor va desapareciendo. Hoy, la negatividad del otro deja paso a la positividad de lo igual [...] Lo que enferma no es la retirada ni la prohibición, sino el exceso de comunicación y consumo.” (Han 2019, 9)
To return to the previous example and question: how is it possible that an *ukiyo-e* can coexist with an illustration by Claudio Gay inside the same space and decibility regime? The issue is not simply one of space management—physically putting these two works together—but of erecting a subject that perceives these objects against a common background. In the Classic Japanese Prints Collection (*ukiyo-e*) that which is iconographic is not a formal feature of the Museum, but a feature that links the objects with others of different provenance. Rather, it constitutes the way in which the subjectification of the Museum is founded. The images are conceived, *a priori*, as representations; that is to say, the heterogeneous is experienced as the sameness of the illustration: the Museum subject originates from a representational idea of the world.

Another example: Pedro de Río Zañartu’s *Chinese Collection*. The interplay of relations between the Asian objects and the subject put to their experience in the Museum can be studied as a sort of neo-orientalism. Using this expression does not mean a direct reference or a debate of the criticisms made with regard to Edward Said’s work, mainly because a) the relationship that Said intends to develop with the East—and by extension with Asia—stems directly from the point of view of Europe’s geopolitical and economic interests (Said 2008, 20), in whose image of the world Latin America is a peripheral region and does not stand out (ibid., 22; Said 2018, 366); b) precisely because of its geographical location, Latin America’s ways of neighbouring with the East or Asia since the 19th century varies between forms of reference—dependence on European literary sources and travelogues (Carmagnani 2015, 14; Gasquet 2015, 17; Gasquet and Lommé 2018, 9), or specific contact contingencies (González 2006, 13) that go far beyond the thought of Edward Said (MacKenzie 1995, 21).

There is only one “Saidian” postulate which has been integrated into the present article and which we consider to be fundamental to it: the historical contact that Europe has maintained with the East, through a set of institutions and spaces which produce knowledge, supposes, to some extent, an *ontologizing*:

Orientalism, then, is not a fantasy that Europe created about the Orient, but a body of theory and practice in which—over many generations—considerable investment has been made. Because of this continuous investment, Orientalism has become a system for knowing the Orient, an accepted filter that it passes through to penetrate Western consciousness. (Said 2008, 26)\(^{10}\)

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\(^{10}\) “El orientalismo, pues, no es una fantasía que creó Europa acerca de Oriente, sino un cuerpo de teoría y práctica en el que, durante muchas generaciones, se ha realizado una inversión considerable.”
In Chile, the Museum is an institution with a marked European inheritance which can be seen in two instances: The first, is a certain public role that expresses itself in the training of artists and construction of a national cultural reservoir (Drien 2018, 4); the second, is an enunciative structure which ontologizes the foreign, that which is not European, the otherness of Art (Zamorano and Herrera 2015, 24) in terms of a universal subject.

There exist two rules for “reading” the Asian that we wish to touch upon, as they construct themselves around the (re)production of the neo-orientalist museal subject: experience as text, and truth as a sub-context.

As has been indicated, the point of anchor for this is that the subjectification of the Museum arises from a representational conception of the world.

The Museum’s First Subjectivizing Principle: The Asian as a Text Ready to Be Read

A summary survey of the last decade in Chile allows us to glimpse a proliferation of studies associated with Asia in the field of the Museum: a) these are inquiries about museum collections which, for the most part, used to be from private collectors; b) its effect is to situate objects within the conceptuality of Art, in the sense of supplying the condition of their experience and legibility. All in all, these attempts tend to be “valorizations” (documentation, recording, and conservation exercises) or temporary exhibitions. For example, research on the Classical Japanese Prints Collection in the Andrés Bello Central Archive of the University of Chile (Maire 2011; 2017a), studies on the Chinese Collection of the Museo Pedro del Río Zañartu in Hualpén (Ulloa 2016), research on the Oriental Collection of the Museo de Artes Decorativas de Santiago (MAD) (Alvarado 2014a; Maire 2017b; Uldry 2017) and work conducted on the Asian Collection of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes between 2011 and 2018 (Keller et. al 2018). These cases do not exhaust all production linked to the Asian artistic phenomenon in Chile, but they are at least indicative of a certain recurrence on the topic.

Certainly, the possibility of studying objects that are historically outside the tradition of Art (European or Western) is in direct line with the universality acquired by the concept of Art since the second half of the 20th century: the pensiveness that is inaugurated with its in-definition (Tatarkiewicz 2001, 29; Oliveras 2004, 64), the un-limitation of all conceptualizations. Despite what has been indicated,
the question we wish to debate is not whether something fits within the concept
of Art or whether it concerns its current institutionalism, but rather how that
pensiveness unfolds an enunciative possibility, around the foreign or the improper
as selfhood or ontology.

For clarification:

How to manage the heterogeneity of significations, origins, and concep-
tions that the works carry; how to generate their neighbourhoods and
associations? There is a problem about Meaning, related not to a defini-
tion of what the objects “are” (a sort of function or telos), but to an inter-
pellation of the itineraries of categorization of the museum space. That is,
how the horizons of reading the collections as an “experience of looking”
are made. (Maire 2017b, 2)\footnote{¿Cómo administrar la heterogeneidad de significaciones, procedencias y concepciones que acarrean
las obras?; ¿cómo generar sus vecindades y asociaciones? Hay allí un problema sobre el Sentido, rela-
cionado no con una definición de lo que los objetos ‘son’ (una suerte de función o telos), sino con una
interpelación a los itinerarios de categorización del espacio museal, esto es, los modos en que se confe-
cionan los horizontes de lectura de las colecciones como una ‘experiencia del mirar’.” (Maire 2017b, 2)}

The Museum’s first subjectivizing principle: the subject of experience is defined as
a subject placed in the textuality of a narrative, by virtue of a meaning that always
precedes it.

The Museum’s subject is defined by a hermeneutic capacity of the world, as an ex-
perience of the real can only be obtained from its reading as a text. Jean-François
Lyotard (2014) offers us two essential elements to refer to the matter. The first
is the positioning of the concept of “symbol” as the otherness not articulated by
discourse; the second, the attitude of the gaze as a totalizing hermeneutic.

For Lyotard, a symbol is an object that is given to us inside thought. In oth-
er words, its existence generates resistance to thought, as its essentiality with-
draws into itself and language—in terms of meaning—faces its own limitations.
Similarly, otherness is almost always a sort of background noise, understanding
it as that which opposes—which is foreign to—the communicativeness of the
sameness. However, this does not imply enunciating an unknowable condition
of the other’s object-symbol; rather, Lyotard (2014, 15) points to the need for
a dissociation between word, language, and gesture, or, if you will, between the
experience of looking and the discourse that intrudes on what is seen. If, for
the French author, what is true of Art is its condition of figure, that “which is
not signified, this function being around and even inside the discourse” (ibid.,
the symbol is that which cannot establish a subject of language that appropriates it when given to the experience of the gaze: the otherness as a symbol implies a “spatial manifestation that the linguistic space cannot incorporate without being shaken” (ibid.).

The structure of the Museum devalues the Asian as a symbol. This loss of value is the symbol’s opening to familiarity, through the installation of the shared enunciative; Johan Idema characterized this as “the jargon of Art” (Idema 2016, 12). The subject’s place in media res is configured by language, and in relation to the Asian is the “valorization” of a discourse device. By “valorization” we refer to the act of communication with the other. This act has the violence of turning a symbol into a sign implied (Lyotard 2014, 19).

Since 1938, the Pedro del Río Zañartu Museum has exhibited objects from the collection that show the cultural and artistic richness of the five continents. The visitors […] get the chance of discovering new worlds […] by the representation of an Egyptian mummy […] and a samurai armour [sic] […].

We can understand the art of the collection shown in this book as a bridge between the Chileans of the region and the cultures of the world [emphasis is ours], especially China, Japan, and Southeast Asia. (Ulloa 2016, 24)

Consequently, the Museum’s subject perceives its own experience as a text; that is to say, the foreign part of the Asian expresses itself from a hermeneutic imperative of its otherness. The question is not simply that the enunciation of an object demands a word, but that the place of the subject in that relation—or mediation—is stipulated by discourse. As Lyotard once said: “The painting is not to be read, as semioticians say; Klee said it is to make people vibrate; it allows us to see; it is offered to the eye as something exemplary” (2014, 19).

12 “Que no es significada, siendo esta función en torno a e incluso en el discurso.” (Lyotard 2014, 17)
13 “Una manifestación espacial que el espacio lingüístico no puede incorporar sin verse sacudido.” (Lyotard 2014, 17)
14 For more information refer to: https://issuu.com/faceaucsc/docs/catalogo_con_rpi/1?f=false
15 “Desde 1938 el Museo Pedro del Río Zañartu, viene exponiendo objetos de la colección que dan cuenta de la riqueza cultural y artística de los cinco continentes […] Los visitantes […] tienen la posibilidad de descubrir nuevos mundos […] representando la momia de Egipto […] y la armadura samurai [sic] […] El arte de la colección que se muestra en este libro, lo podemos entender como un puente entre los chilenos de la región y las culturas del mundo [énfasis es mío], en especial China, Japón y Sud Este Asiático.” (Ulloa 2016, 24)
16 “El cuadro no es para ser leído, como dicen los semiólogos; Klee decía que es para hacer vibrar;
What constitutes *Japanese* Art? Or, better yet, what makes up the description of how it is experienced? To ask this question does not entail a tautology and is not an idle endeavour. However, it is indeed an interrogation that can produce an illusory answer (ibid., 20), unless the subject—he or she who reads—accepts the referral of the gaze deep within its speech—of the object which is thought of as a text—as *truth*.

In other words, the subjectification of the Museum implies two things: first, that the subject must accept that his or her experience is a process of reading—a deciphering of—objects from a shared language (Art’s); and second, that the textuality on which he bases his experience in the Museum’s space is universal (applicable to any object) and true (as a norm and verisimilitude).

Two examples of this: regarding a set of *netsuke* housed in Santiago’s Museo de Artes Decorativas (MAD) it can be discussed, explained—even textualized—that “Japanese creations are, in general, characterized by a profound awareness of feeling, of the subtlety of shapes, love for simplicity, a preference for textures, shapes, and colours” (Alvarado 2014b, 5), and this is further touched upon by what was stated in the Museum’s exposition of the *Oriental Collection*:

> The ornamental designs [...] give an account of a wide iconographic repertoire, thus gaining access to the symbolism of each figure and, therefore, learning, understanding, and thus enjoying oriental culture. *The objects diffusion also instates an explicative museography that goes in-depth into the iconographic repertoire present in the objects in an informative and enlightening manner. This in turn facilitates the visitor’s approach to these pieces.* (Museo de Artes Decorativas 2017, 1) [emphasis is ours]

**The Museum’s Second Subjectivizing Principle: The *Asian* as the Experience of a Context**

The basis of the subjectification of the Museum (the representational conception of the world) implies that the experience of the other—the foreignness—can
occur as a substitution for the non-present or a manifestation of the non-evident (Rancière 2011a, 122–23; 2011b, 16). The textual principle of the museal subject is the unlimited capacity to represent in everything the same thing; in other words, that everything can be readable, communicable, and interchangeable at the discursive level:

The dialogue of “civilizations” is, at best, nothing more than a convenient alibi for the “dominant” civilization. [...] So what is there to talk about in these “dialogue” sessions where hypocritical kindnesses rival each other? The texts? But the texts, as we have already seen, only say what we want them to say. (Claire 2011, 91)

The Chilean Museum has elaborated a subject that experiences more of a speech (the capacity to read and sign the world), than a subject that is found in the heterogeneity that arises from the gaze.

Consequence: in the deployment of the Chilean Museum’s regime, the improper—the non-European, the foreign—is devoid or separated from the gaze as a sense of novelty.

Byung Chul Han, revisiting Lacan and Sartre, states that that which is essential to the object is its foreignness in experience, in other words, its event is always an opposition—a reservation, negativity, a strangeness—to the subject. Thus, the object always summons the gaze, as it is “the completely different, unaffordable to any foresight, which is not subject to any calculation, and which instils fear” (Han 2019, 73). In its radical negativity, the object is the otherness; in its condition of absolute surrender or conquest, it has become a commodity.

The Museum does not engage in a subjectification of the object (Asian or otherwise) as an otherness. Neither does it fabricate commodities: it tends to produce curatorial documents.

The curatorial document animates a sophisticated mediality, derived from the textualization of the subject, in which the object, having lost its character of symbol and otherness (devoid of being looked at or seen), becomes a narrative structure: its significance is driven by the discourses that fix the object to a fictitious unit, the epochal context.

19 “El diálogo de «civilizaciones» no es, en el mejor de los casos, más que una cómoda coartada para la civilización ‘dominante’ [...] pues, ¿de qué se puede hablar en estas sesiones de ‘diálogo’ donde se rivaliza en hipocritas amabilidades? ¿De los textos? Pero los textos, ya lo hemos visto, no dicen más que aquello que queremos que digan.” (Claire 2011, 91)

20 “Lo completamente distinto, inasequible a toda previsión, que no se somete a ningún calculo y que infunde miedo.” (Han 2019, 73)
A radical example: the exhibition of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes’ (MNBA) Asian Collection held in 2018 was designed in such a way that the meaning—the horizon of interpretation—of the pieces could only be located in the (re)construction of their context; in other words, the objects in the collection generated an experience, insofar as the subject accessed them as a representation:

In order to contextualise this interesting period, it has been decided to complement this exhibition with pieces from the collection of the National Historical Museum (MHN) and the Museum of Decorative Arts (MAD) [...] Incorporating [...] objects that formed part [...] of the everyday life of Japanese society between the 17th and mid-19th century. (Keller et. al 2018, 7)

The said curatorial document can also describe an artefact, a methodologic product. The object, once divested of its condition as a device of the gaze (Aumont 1992, 15) with respect to its own ideology about visuality, becomes a device about time. However, said time exists exclusively for the museal subject. This last statement has the impact of reordering the possible points of analysis of the object. What is important here is not the mutation (objectivation) of the object, but the order of subjectivation, which is how this transformation is gestated.

The subject which has been produced by—and inside—the textuality of the Museum, has spatialized Time as a question-foundation of objects, and the meaning of experience within discourse. It is not simply a question of when are the objects from, but rather it encompasses a transcendental horizon: where are they inscribed, as curatorial documents? This is a claim to its context—how its objectivity is read—and its location within (Art) History—the simulacrum of a Universal Time that taxonomizes the temporalities of the curatorial document and its form/content. (Jiménez–Blanco 2021, 82).

Inside the Pedro del Río Zañartu Museum’s museal project, which brings together objects from different parts of the world, such as Japan and China (Cartes 2010, 100), it can be read:

The types of objects collected by Pedro del Río such as folkloric, exotic, new, and antique objects, are, according to Baudrillard (2003), neither entirely functional nor simply decorative but fulfill the function of

21 “Con el fin de contextualizar este interesante periodo es que se ha decidido complementar esta muestra con piezas de la colección del Museo Histórico Nacional (MHN) y del Museo de Artes Decorativas (MAD) [...] Incorporando [...] objetos que formaban parte [...] de la vida cotidiana de la sociedad japonesa entre el siglo XVII y mediados del XIX.” (Keller et. al 2018, 7)
signifying time within the system of said objects. (Castañeda and Soffia 2012, 45)

The Asian in Chile’s museal scene is not the affirmation of an object itself, but a temporal dispersion (the curatorial document) that must be (re)located within another Time, a borrowed one, in the measure of a conciliation, namely, from the contingency of the discourse in which the subject is disposed and supported: they are included into museal guidelines. Wondering about the context of an object, then, is not an attempt at conquering its own specificity, or attempting to meet the other as a thought exercise or as an experience. The context, then, is the place of expression of the discourse of the subject of the experience. It is the project of consciousness—a minimum truth or legibility—about the foreign, the other, which in turn allows for the realization of History’s unicity. A narrative, then, is “the paper sheet inside the subject [which registers] the sum of dispersing and concordant truths” (Ricoeur 2015, 55).

The relationship between subject and context is manifested in the experience of a semanticized time represented through the curatorial document; the Museum places the subject in the meaning of the world, provided that the manifestation of the object and the context are understood as the “purpose in the society that produces them and the meaning given to them by their authors and users” (Claire 2011, 80) and, in this, a common registration horizon.

Otherwise, the Asian is an alien-real that renounces its object-form, an otherness that is discounted in thought, an event without a gaze. Asia thus becomes merely a place which is used in the Museum; a margin of the network of possible statements in the museum that is restituted as textuality, in relation to History as a sign, speech, and the space of transit between room and room:

Floating World of the Edo period [the name given in 2018 to the exhibition of the Asian Collection of the MNBA] seeks to create zones in which the visitor expands their curiosity and learning, connecting with the exhibition through a script associated with narratives about daily life in Japan [...] The museography seeks to give accessibility to the objects and

22 “Los tipos de objeto [sic] coleccionados […] por Pedro del Río, tales como objetos folclóricos, exóticos, nuevos y antiguos, no son, según Baudrillard (2003), enteramente funcionales ni simplemente decorativos sino que cumplen la función en el marco del sistema de los objetos, de significar el tiempo.” (Castañeda and Soffia 2012, 45)

23 “La hoja de papel en el sujeto [que registra] la adición de las verdades dispersas y concordantes.” (Ricoeur 2015, 55)

24 “Finalidad en la sociedad que las produce y el sentido que les dan sus autores y usuarios.” (Claire 2011, 80)
Founding Asian Studies in Art: From the Institutionalized Subject to the Collector Subject in Chile

Is there any hope of overcoming the current “Museum” subject regarding the Asian and, by derivation, an opening towards a new field of problematization of the object?

We believe that it is necessary to rethink the object Asia within the Museum, starting by differentiating two phenomena of study: Asia as a museum collection—which is how it has been mostly investigated – and private collecting. This should be our first task.

If the Museum’s subjectivation brings forth a behavioural pattern stemmed from Modernity (Malraux 2017, 3)—by this we refer to the issue of the *aspecting* and legibilization of the sensible-real as Language and Time—we must then use a post-modern sensibility in opposition to it, an “attempt to dismantle the modern image of a self-transparent and indissoluble identity [subjectivity]” (Vásquez 2015, 42). We must, then, criticize *museality* when it takes its form of “communicability of the same thing.”

Consequently, separating the Museum from private collecting is to resituate the subject in the otherness, where the problem is “no longer to think of the other, but to understand oneself in the different and the fruitful in which we live and, from which, concrete articulations of different senses of being are born” (Vallega 2018, 124).

Jorge Luis Borges provides a good counterpoint to clarify this issue, which summarizes a way of being in the other, inside the *otherness*. In *What is Buddhism?* (1976), an unpublished work, he commented:

> It would have been absurd for me to present on a doctrine to which I have devoted so many years—and of which I have understood little—in

25 “Mundo flotante del período Edo busca crear zonas en las que el visitante expanda su curiosidad, aprendizaje y se conecte con la muestra a través de un guión asociado a narrativas sobre la vida cotidiana de Japón […] La museografía busca dar accesibilidad a los objetos y presentarlos contextualizados, junto con sugerir espacios de interpretación.” (Barra 2018, 12)

26 “Un intento de desmontar la imagen moderna de una identidad [subjetividad] autotransparente e indisoluble.” (Vásquez 2015, 42)

27 “No es pensar al otro, sino entenderse en lo distinto y lo fecundo en que estamos viviendo y, a partir de lo cual, nacen articulaciones concretas de sentidos de ser.” (Vallega 2018, 124)
the spirit of displaying a museum piece. For me, Buddhism is not a museum piece. (Borges in Betancort 2018, 236)28

In Borges’s text, Buddhism is conceived from the reserve of the noise and the abyss: it is an object sustained by that which is foreign, from the negativity of the improper. The object “Buddhism” is given to thought without being clarified by language or, better yet, in a way in which communicability fails and the—rather elusive—experience never ends up being fully textualized. The subject publicized by Borges is decentred from its possibilities of knowledge (of the economy of the sign) and thus, is not totalized—or intercepted—by the discourses that propitiate setting the object “Buddhism” inside a truth. As an object grounded in experience and as a word, Buddhism does not give rise to categories (due to its translations), but the abyss; to the production of a continuous displacement of its signification that does not consummate in experience.

Following Hayek’s line of thought, we could say that museum subjectivity is institutional. In other words, it is where the possibilities of “experiencing” or “gaining experience” are underlined by the Museum’s—coercive—discourses and agendas. The Museum’s rules of formation articulate a non-autonomous subject (Hayek 2020a, 76–77); consequently, museality comes to the subject as an anticipatory, distributive order, which conjures up three co-substantial attributes: a) it defines the rules of its conduct; b) prescribes specific outcomes and, c) is mandated by a telos (the Museum’s curatorial project) (Hayek 2020a, 41). As such, we can confidently say that:

Art is a language that allows us to communicate beyond language and cultural differences [emphasis mine]. The traveler’s vision of the museum’s potential as an agent of diffusion of other peoples and customs is the conviction that motivates to propose this view from art. (Ulloa 2016, 30)29

Collecting Asian items in Chile is not an object brought forth by a rule of formation; it responds, in all its complex variety, to the instability of the deinstitutionalized subject proposed by Hayek. Studying such collecting would allow us to explore a new field, to deepen and emphasize the muteness of the subject-object bond as a dispersed phenomenon, irreducible to a single rule of formation and mediation with otherness.

28 “Hubiese sido absurdo que yo expusiera una doctrina a la cual he dedicado tantos años—y de la que he entendido poco, realmente—con ánimo de mostrar una pieza de museo. Para mí el budismo no es una pieza de museo.” (Borges in Betancort 2018, 236)

29 “El arte es un lenguaje que permite comunicar más allá de diferencias idiomáticas y culturales [énfasis es mío]. La visión del viajero sobre el potencial del museo como agente de difusión de otros pueblos y costumbres, es la convicción que motiva a plantear esta mirada desde el arte.” (Ulloa 2016, 30)
Such a deployment can only be allowed on the precedent of an *unpredictable* subject of collecting (Hayek 2020b, 106), or on condition of a subjectivity of contingency. We shall use the next example as a minimal starting point.

The current Asian Collection of the MNBA—made up of twenty-two *ukiyo-e* and five monochrome paintings on paper—was donated in 1930 by Luisa Lynch del Solar (1864–1937), a Chilean aristocrat (Figueroa 1925, 127) married to Carlos Morla Vicuña (1846–1901), politician and diplomat.

Considering the 2018 catalogue of the Asian Collection, Lynch’s private collection produced two approaches: the first one, its public display (MNBA 1910, 4; Vidor 1930, 7), and the second one had to do with the “relationship to the sociocultural context of its time and place of origin, [which was] an impetus for the division of curatorship according to its iconography” (Keller et. al 2018, 18–19). This installed, as a pivot, the orientalist phenomenon in the formation of Asian collections.

In that investigation, however, there was no approach to the rules of formation which informed Lynch’s collecting (ibid., 48), of the constitution of the subject “collecting” where the other is installed from a peculiar performativity.

Glimpses of how the collected object formed in Luisa Lynch’s collection can be unravelled, tangentially, from the diaries of her daughters Carmen and Ximena (*Chimène*) Morla.

The bond of affinity upon which the “Lynch subject” is founded with the object of otherness is not aprioristic (already captured by discourse) as it tends to resolve itself as a subjectivity in the contingency of otherness.

Luisa Lynch’s collecting was developed between 1898 and 1899, when Carlos Morla Vicuña became Chile’s Plenipotentiary Minister to Japan and the US. Thus, the first reference to Asia (“Japanese art”) is found, anecdotally, in Carmen’s diary, dated April 1898:

> A collector of Japanese vases brought mom a very delicate vase. It was a *cloisonné* [...] Dad also admired it and I was happy to hear Monsieur Morgan say: “Japan is a real art museum! [...]” I see my dear mom’s golden eyes again, full of light, delighted to go there, and dad with his old book finder’s manias, has discovered a book by Edmond de Goncourt on “Japanese Art”. (Diaz 2016, 398)

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30 “Relación con el contexto sociocultural de su época y lugar de origen, [que fue] un impulso para la división de la curatoría según su iconografía.” (Keller et. al 2018, 18–19)

31 “Un señor coleccionista de jarrones japoneses le llevó a mamá un vaso muy delicado. Era un *cloisonné*
Except for Goncourt’s book, it is not possible to appeal—if only in a residual way—to an orientalist discourse as a formation of the collector subject in Lynch. In fact, the subject of orientalism can only be suggested briefly in April 1902 in Paris, three years after the family left Japan:

We went with mom and Blanca to a Japanese exhibition advertised with a lot of publicity. It is unbelievable that in Paris there is so much rubbish on display. There was not a kakemono worth its salt, not a Utamaro print […], not even a Hiroshige […] the lacquers were poorly made, pour l’exportation. I see that mama has wonders. (Díaz 2016, 323–24)

In the diaries one notices in Lynch a “sign” for the unplanned acquisition of her pieces: they burst in as an act of the unprecedented, they cross the subject in question for a look from the otherness, which is both an arbitrary and unrepresentable exercise of that which is “other”. In other words, the noise which objects irradiate and the muteness of the subject when it encounters otherness:

Carlos [Author’s note: she is referring to her brother] is crazy with admiration; he has seen Javier Larrain’s vases [Author’s note: Chilean diplomat in Japan], the collections of bronzes, gilded lacquers, etc., and pushes mom to go see them […] Mom and dad are not thinking about settling down […] They will leave with Javier Larrain immediately, in artistic research. From that moment on, they became caught up in a real collecting craze. (Díaz 2016, 399)

An obvious note: in all collecting subjectivity there is an inseparable link between desire and will (Cano de Gardoqui 2001, 18; Díaz 2006, 33); here, however, the question is the rule that defines this transcendental juncture as the formation of a type of interest—a subjectivity—of purchase. For the Morla–Lynch’s, that which

32 “Fuimos con mamá y blanca a una exposición japonesa anunciada con mucho bombo. Es increíble que en París se exponga tanta pacotilla. No había un kakemono que valiera la pena, ni una estampa de Utamaro […], ni siquiera un Hiroshige […] las lacas eran hechizas, pour l’exportation. Veo que mamá tiene maravillas.” (Díaz 2016, 398)

33 “Carlos [Nota del autor: se refiere a su hermano] está loco de admiración; ha visto los floreros de Javier Larraín [Nota del autor: diplomático de Chile en Japón], las colecciones de bronce, de laca dorada, etc., e impulsó a mamá para que vaya a ver eso […] Mamá y papá no piensan en instalarse […] salen con Javier Larraín de inmediato, en investigación artística. Desde ese momento, los coge una verdadera locura coleccionista.” (Díaz 2016, 399)
is Japanese is inherently contingent upon their stay in Japan: it implies that when an object happens, it is unmanageable as a sense of what is seen. The imperative subjectivity which reigns over the object is not resolved by the usual museum textuality: it is a matter of a subject inanticipable to the object:

Curiosity sellers have come to bring rare things for the new travellers. We took them in our hands: they brought ivories, small “nestés” [...] We were all enchanted, taken by the charm of the miniatures. (Díaz 2016, 399)

Lynch’s collection is then derived, regarding its rules of formation, from the conjunctural logics of offer and demand. Its subject is found in the act of materially—rather than intellectually—collecting and its efforts to bring distinction the collector:

When mom and dad return, they find us installed in front of a collection of objects that they examine very seriously and choose some pieces. Among others, a rock crystal bunny with red eyes, to the despair of Javier Larraín, who wanted it for his collection. Collectors are true rivals among themselves; and so it was that he, jealous that someone else possessed it, broke the ears of the glass bunny with a blow of his cane. (Díaz 2016, 399–400)

Carmen Morla will also call these sellers as kuriosmen (Díaz 2016, 411).

One last note: owning and doing, in this case, would juxtapose in a paradigmatic way, by reason of another rule that would have to be developed more loosely in future research. In the current Asian Collection there are four works of Chinese ink on paper without authorship (no stamps, signatures, or inscriptions have been found on them), and whose formal execution is different from the other objects.

In the girls’ diaries it is briefly mentioned that both Carmen and Ximena had practiced drawing with Chinese ink with a Japanese artist at the Sacred Heart Nunnery in Tōkyō:

34 “Vendedores de curiosidades han llegado a traer cosas raras para los nuevos viajeros. Las tomamos en nuestras manos: traen marfiles, pequeñas ‘nestés’ […] Estábamos todos lodos, tomados por el encanto de las miniaturas.” (Díaz 2016, 399)

35 “Cuando regresan mamá y papá, nos encuentran instalados delante de una verdadera colección que ellos examinan con mucha seriedad y escogen algunas piezas, entre otras, un conejito en cristal de roca y de ojos rojos, frente a la desesperación de Javier Larraín, quien lo quería para su colección. Los coleccionistas son verdaderos rivales entre ellos; y así fue como él, de un golpe de bastón, quebró las orejas del conejito de cristal, celoso que otro lo poseyera.” (Díaz 2016, 399–400)

Only one thing amused me: the painting and design lessons that an old Japanese artist gave us. A roll of rice paper in my hand, a long brush made of rabbit hair, a stone of Chinese ink rubbed in water, and that was all we needed to begin [...] They entertained me enormously and I looked forward to those lessons, for which I accepted so many sad and monotonous hours in the convent. (Diaz 2016, 404)  

Are those unidentified pieces the work of Ximena Morla Lynch?  
The dating of the paper of the objects corresponds at least to the second half of the 19th century, as stated in the catalogue. Also, according to other testimonies, Ximena Morla maintained a constant artistic production during her life, especially in painting (Díaz 2014, 202–20).  
The matter of the authorship of the pieces not only has value for their identification, but also establishes an internal principle of connection as a donated collection, of referral with other objects (without ignoring a possible premeditated intention of Luisa Lynch to pass off Ximena’s pieces as Japanese).  

It seems to us—and this could constitute a thesis for future work—that the sense of continuity of the pieces obeys, above all, to the needs of Luisa Lynch’s private exhibition circuit: the literary salon and social gatherings. If within the Museum the object is given as a curatorial document and, therefore, as a problematic about its inscription in the narrative of History, in Lynch’s collecting it possesses a unity in the imitative, in the intimate construction of singular correlations of her private space. And here we can see more than the attempt to give formal kinship to the objects, and interpretation of homogeneity made a posteriori, namely, from the dimension of decorum or social use in the art of salon conversation.

Conclusions

This article is mainly interested in analysing the way in which the Asian is given to existence inside Art, particularly in the Chilean museal order, and in relationship to the current category known as Asian Studies. This implies a twofold critical approach: On the one hand, because it means questioning the conditions of possibility of the experience of Asia within the Museum (to debate how that which

37 “Sólo una cosa me divertía: era la lección de pintura y diseño que nos daba un viejo artista japonés: un rollo de papel de arroz en la mano, un largo pincel de pelo de conejo, una piedra de tinta china que se frota en el agua, ¡y eso era todo para comenzar! […] Eso me entretenía enormemente y yo esperaba con impaciencia el momento de ese aprendizaje, por el cual aceptaba tantas horas tristes y monótonas en el convento.” (Díaz 2016, 404)
is foreign becomes familiar); and, on the other, to wonder if providing Asia with a “necessary appearance” implies its capitalization inside Chilean Asian Studies.

To the question do Asian Studies on Art exist in Chilean museums? We must answer with a firm no.

The “Asian” object is not essentially different—it offers no counterforce or supremacy—to other corpora in the Museum: a Japanese or Chinese piece’s heuristics are not sui generis, as any object, whether “pre-Hispanic”, “European” or “modern”, is clarified within a parentage (Hernández 2006, 113). The non-objectification of Asia within the field of the Museum in Chile is also the principle that subtracts it from Asian Studies.

Asia is no more than a topic, a label inside Museal Studies, and not an already resolved or singular enunciative field.

The heart of the issue is that in the Chilean Museum the Asian does not rest on a problematic over the formation of the object—the study of the Unheard Of—rather, it is constituted by the totalization of a subjectivation, the experience of a subject of the museal space.

The Museum’s subjectivation is consistent with the apparition and repetition of an institutional experience—speech. The museal subject is articulated through an enunciation field, whose laws of formation correspond to a textual-contextual conception of that which is real, that is experience is compatible with one’s own experience.

First consequence: through the surface of the Museum, the otherness, the polyvalence of objects, the temporalities, and dispersions of that which is foreign can be transcribed—or translated—towards an absolute subject of perception. The object “Museum” transforms into a curatorial document. That which is Asian becomes stuck to the set of relationships (the realization of the truth) which make up Museal Studies.

The subjectivation of the Museum, in which the foreign becomes a textualization and hegemony of context as narrative, tends to exempt a phenomenon intimately related to the formation of museum collections: private collections. In fact, a brief history of the relationship between the Museum and private collecting in Chile shows a sustained dynamic in which the private sector becomes dispossessed of its collections—via donation—while the public sector reappropriates them.

This article postulates that the separation—and differentiated discovery—between the Museum and collecting will redefine the positioning of the Asian and its necessity as a field of study.
The second consequence is of a more projective kind: to open the exploration of Asian collecting in Chile is to inaugurate Asia as a particular object of study within the Humanities, especially in the field of Art: Not because it allows for the possibility of the emergence of a new set of contents that can be proliferated, but because it gives a visible place to the *inconceivable* in the experience of the other. In other words, it brings to light that which is *foreign*, strange, the *noise* its apparition makes in the perception of it as a novelty, regarding the limits of that which is decidable about objects and that which articulates them into a sense of unity.

To inaugurate the *locus* of Asian collecting in Chile is to make it enter a specificity: centring itself around a certain experience as a problem and, in turn, founded on a necessity, the analytical study of its condition as a phenomenon. Both issues would bring Asian collecting research under the jurisdiction of Asian Studies—thus extirpating them from the domain of Museal Studies—on condition, however, of facilitating a *decentring of the museal subject*.

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