The Aesthetics of Empire: The Pursuit of the Ideal Beauty in Early 20th Century Japanese & Korean Art

Thursday, February 7 | 4:00 p.m.
Carpenter Room (Rubenstein Library, room 249)
Duke University, West Campus

After the annexation of Korea in 1910, Japanese artists enthusiastically toured their recently acquired colonial territory seeking new sources for artistic expression. Amongst the resulting images, the figure of the Korean beauty became a prominent and nearly ubiquitous subject. This talk will trace how this interest coalesced at a critical moment in which imported Western ideals of depicting beauty, the inheritance of Orientalist perceptions, and the readily available figure of the courtesan were melded together into a new erotic trope that was easily consumable for both Japanese and Korean audiences.

A scholar of East Asian art, Nancy Lin’s research focuses on modern Japanese and Korean art (late-19th century to mid-20th century), with special emphasis on the genre of painting. Lin spent the 2015-16 academic year as a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University’s Korea Institute. Previously, she spent a year (2011-12) as a visiting scholar at Seoul National University’s Kyujanggak Institute and as a researcher at Tokyo University of the Arts (2010-11). She is a graduate of the University of Chicago.