



The Department of Anthropology  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

presents a seminar

by

**Louise Allison CORT**

Curator for Ceramics

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery  
Smithsonian Institution

on

# Making Pots in Mainland Southeast Asia

Friday, 7 September 2018

1:00 – 2:30 pm

Room 12 Humanities Building

New Asia College, CUHK

A light lunch will be served at 12:30 pm. First come first served.

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**Abstract:**

Potters at work today in villages of Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and southern Yunnan province, PRC, make earthenware or stoneware for local and regional markets. Although under pressure from various social and material changes, these two basic types of ceramics still play important roles in local food preparation and storage and in religious rituals. The technologies associated with their production reveal cultural continuities and boundaries that are obscured by the commonplace classifications of populations on the basis of language, ethnicity, or modern nationality. Field research conducted in collaboration with Dr. Leedom Lefferts, from 1989 to 2011, took us to over two hundred communities to witness methods of pottery production. Through close observation and videotape recording of potters at work, we identified two fundamental patterns of production technology for stoneware and seven patterns for earthenware. Unlike the malleable forms and surface decorations that are usually the focus of study, these patterns of making—largely invisible in the final products—are the truly significant and enduring transmissions along generations of makers. Our analysis focused on how these core methods of pottery production cut across modern political borders to reveal fundamental links among language and cultural groups, and how these connections hint at patterns of migration and interaction. This talk presents a broad summary of our research process and its major conclusions.

**Bio:**

**Louise Allison CORT** is Curator for Ceramics at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Her interests include historical and contemporary ceramics in Japan, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, Japanese baskets and textiles, and the Japanese arts of tea (*chanoyu*). In 2008 she prepared (with George Ashley Williams IV and David P. Rehfuss) the online catalogue *Ceramics in Mainland Southeast Asia: Collections in the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery*. In 2012 she received the thirty-third Koyama Fujio Memorial Prize for her research on historical and contemporary Japanese ceramics, and the Smithsonian Distinguished Scholar Award.

ALL INTERESTED ARE WELCOME