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For Immediate Use  
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## Fowler Exhibition Tells Story of Tea through Art from Asia, Europe and America

*Steeped in History: The Art of Tea*  
on display Aug 16–Nov 29, 2009



Hot or iced, bagged or loose, black or green—whatever form it takes, enjoying a cup of tea is an act performed at least three billion times a day the world over. Indeed, more people drink tea than any other beverage except water. *Steeped in History: The Art of Tea*—on display at the Fowler Museum at UCLA from Aug 16–Nov 29, 2009—is a wide-ranging survey that brings together art from three continents and many centuries to delve into the history and culture of tea.

Traveling from Asia to the West, tea has played a variety of profound roles on the world scene—as an ancient health remedy, an element of cultural practice, and source of spiritual insight. Historically it was also a catalyst for international conflicts and horrific labor conditions in various countries.

Throughout its history tea has been a prevalent theme in the visual arts—scenes of tea embellish ceramics and textiles and are the subject of paintings and drawings, and all manner of vessels have been fashioned for the preparation and presentation of tea. *Steeped in History* brings together rare Chinese ceramics and paintings, 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Japanese ceramics and prints, extraordinary English and Colonial American paintings, vintage photographs and historical documents, tea-serving paraphernalia and furniture from many countries, and much more—to tell the fascinating history of tea.

### China, The Cradle of Tea Culture

After a brief introduction to tea varieties, cultivation, and production, the exhibition considers tea's mythic origins in the hills of South China. Tea was already in use as a medicinal plant in the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BCE). By the time the *Chajing*, the first book on tea, was written in 780 CE, tea was widely cultivated in southwestern China and had been elevated to an “elixir of immortality” in Daoism, used as imperial tribute, celebrated in poetry, enjoyed by literati, transported on camelback to the Central Asian steppes, and sold on street corners.

Over the centuries, Chinese artisans created the most inventive and infinitely varied kinds of teas, and the art and material culture of tea flourished. This section of the exhibition includes a lavishly painted portrait of Shen Nong, the legendary inventor of tea; exquisite porcelain tea bowls dating from the 8<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries; scrolls and watercolors illustrating Chinese tea trade and culture, and stereo card photographic prints depicting tea drinking in Peking during the late-19<sup>th</sup>–early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **The Way of Tea in Japan**

The next section of the exhibition explores tea's enormous significance in Japan, where it was first introduced, along with Buddhism, during the early Heian period (794–1185) by monks who had traveled to China to study Chan (Zen) Buddhism. Tea was drunk in monasteries and in some aristocratic circles, but it was not until the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century that its role in Japanese arts and culture became more prominent, after the Buddhist priest Eisai brought back to Japan the powdered tea (known in Japan as *matcha*) then popular in Song China.

Tea drinking spread among the military aristocracy and the interactions between the warrior elite and Zen priests produced one of the early forms of *chanoyu*, known in the West as the Japanese tea ceremony. Tea was so central to Japanese culture by the second half of the Edo period (1615–1868) that everyday articles and accessories, such as the *netsuke*, decorative Japanese belt toggles that hung from the sashes of kimono, were frequently decorated with tea-related motifs.

The opening of Japan to the West in the 1850s brought new topics and themes to tea-related arts, as well as to the development of tea wares produced for Western markets. Stoneware tea caddies, tea bowls, scrolls and other tea-related objects from the 10<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries attest to the long history and important place that tea holds in Japanese culture. A magnificent bed cover decorated with images of tea utensils and other auspicious items suggests how tea culture permeated even personal parts of Japanese life.

### **Tea Craze in the West**

When tea first arrived in Europe in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, it was not readily accepted. Tea drinking caught on quickly, however, in The Netherlands, where the import arrived along with Chinese and Japanese porcelain vessels for its preparation and serving. By the mid-seventeenth century the European upper classes had fully embraced the three exotic caffeinated beverages—coffee, tea, and chocolate—and gradually these imports became more affordable and their consumption spread to the general population. As the regimen of tea was popularized and perfected, artists and marketers strove to create sophisticated tea accoutrements, and these became status symbols. Furniture was especially designed for afternoon tea, like the elegant French tripod table featuring a tea-drinking scene, circa 1680, on display.

The European porcelain industry took off after the long-held Chinese secret of porcelain making was finally understood in Germany in 1708. The exhibition features many early English teacups, sets, and caddies, as well as works on paper and paintings that attest to the status of tea in Europe.

The first tea to reach America was introduced by the Dutch, and the habit of tea drinking spread quickly among the colonies. In order to control the profits of the tea trade, the English Parliament sought to eliminate foreign competition by passing legislation that required colonists to import their tea solely from Great Britain, which led to the colonists

buying smuggled tea—at half the price of British tea. This—accompanied by a number of tax acts that collected revenues for the Crown and at the same time penalized colonists' consumption of smuggled tea—led to tea becoming forever associated with revolutionary actions, of which the Boston Tea Party is only the best known.

One of the highlights of the exhibition is the inclusion of several notable early American oil paintings showing the role of tea in colonial life, including works lent by the National Gallery of Art, the Maryland State Archives, and the Chicago Historical Society. Other works on view, such as a silver sugar urn from the Fowler collection by noted Boston patriot and silversmith Paul Revere, recall the role of tea in Revolutionary protests. A stunning array of elaborate tea vessels reveals the continuing popularity of the beverage in American culture today.

### **Tea and Empire**

Britain's ever-increasing appetite for tea brought enormous profit to the British Crown and to the East India Company. This section of *Steeped in History* explores tea as a global commodity at the height of the British Empire, the development of large-scale tea plantations in northern India, and the link between tea and the Indian opium trade. Historical photographs show tea parties in Calcutta and tea production in Darjeeling, while a series of engravings depict the stages involved in processing opium.

Final works in this section—including posters, prints, photographs, and a 1940 map that oddly excludes China from a list of tea-producing nations—reveal the ongoing dialogues about tea in relation to politics, agriculture, health, and society today.

### **Additional Information**

*Steeped in History: The Art of Tea* is guest curated by Beatrice Hohenegger, author of *Liquid Jade: The Story of Tea from East to West* (St. Martin's Press, 2007), who also edited the multi-authored volume *Steeped in History: The Art of Tea* (ISBN: 978-0-9778344-1-9, 2009), published by the Fowler Museum in conjunction with this exhibition and distributed by the University of Washington Press. Major support for the exhibition and publication is provided by the Henry Luce Foundation

Presented by



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The Fowler is open Wednesdays through Sundays, from noon to 5 p.m.; and on Thursdays, from noon until 8 p.m. The museum is closed Mondays and Tuesdays. The Fowler Museum, part of UCLA Arts, is located in the north part of the UCLA campus. Admission is free. Parking is available for a maximum of \$9 in Lot 4. For more information, the public may call 310/825-4361 or visit [fowler.ucla.edu](http://fowler.ucla.edu).

**Related Events:**

August 23, 2009 1–4 pm

**Kids in the Courtyard: Tea for You!**

Design your own packaging for the world's most popular drink and take your tea bag home to enjoy a nice "cuppa"! An outdoor concert follows, see below.

August 23, 2009 4 pm

**Summer Sunset Concert: Blue 13 Dance Company**

Blue 13 Dance Company returns to the Fowler for an exhilarating performance in their signature Bollywood-Tech™ style—contemporary dance theatre rooted in the traditions and inspirations of Indian dance, music, and culture. Special post-show dance lesson! A children's art workshop precedes this concert, see above.

September 12, 2009 4 pm

**Fowler OutSpoken Lecture: Beatrice Hohenegger: Steeped in History: The Art of Tea**

Guest curator and tea specialist Beatrice Hohenegger considers the history and culture of tea, one of the world's most ubiquitous beverages.

September 20, 2009 1–4 pm

**Kids in the Courtyard: The Perfect Blend**

Do you like cooking or creating fancy drinks? If so, you'll love this month's activity of blending teas. We'll have several herbs available for you to create your own special tea blends. Then you'll scoop them into take-home tea bags.

September 24, 2009 7 pm

**Fowler OutSpoken Lecture: Sanjay Subrahmanyam: From Elephants to Tea; The Nilgris Under Colonial Rule**

UCLA professor of history Sanjay Subrahmanyam focuses on the transformation of the Nilgiri Hills over the course of the 19th and early-20th centuries as they became a significant producer of tea under the colonial plantation system. First 'discovered' by the British in the late 1810s, this area (literally the 'Blue Mountains') emerged first as a resort and an area for elephant hunting, before eventually becoming one of the favored centers of colonial tea production together with Assam, North Bengal and Sri Lanka. The changes that the plantation system wrought had significant effects both on the indigenous populations of the area, and on the relationship with the animal world. Co-sponsored by the UCLA Asia Institute.

October 3, 2009 6–8:30 pm

**Members' Opening Party: Leaves and Grass**

An only-at-the-Fowler event celebrating our fall exhibitions *Steeped in History: The Art of Tea* and *Grass Roots: African Origins of an American Art*.

October 18, 2009 2 pm

**Korean Tea Ceremony Demonstration and Tasting**

Los Angeles-based artist Bonghwa Kim demonstrates the meditative and artistic aspects of the Korean tea ceremony. The program concludes on a sweet note with a tasting of tea and Korean treats. \$15 members; \$20 non-members. Space limited; reservations required: 310/825-8655.

October 24, 2009 3 pm

**Fowler OutSpoken Lecture: Pei-kai Cheng: Tea and Chinese Cultural Aesthetics**

Pei-kai Cheng, founding director and professor, Chinese Civilisation Centre, City University of Hong Kong and author of the recent two-volume publication *The Complete Annotated Collection of Chinese Tea Books*, explores the cultural significance of tea drinking during the Tang period (618–907 CE). Cheng discusses the change and continuity of “The Way of Tea” (chado) from the Tang-Song period (7th–13th century) to the Ming-Qing period (14th–19th century), revealing the cultural diversity of the tea-drinking ceremony as influenced by various social entities and institutions and by agronomical and technological advances. This talk also examines how aesthetic appreciation and choice of wares for tea ceremony influenced the development of Chinese porcelain-making technology.

Co-sponsored by the UCLA Asia Institute.

October 25, 2009 11:30 am–5:30 pm

**Fowler On the Town: Kulov’s Tea Tour: Some Like It Hot**

Join Kulov, founder of the Annual Valentine’s Tea Festival, for tours of unique tea experiences in Los Angeles. Whether you’re a budding tea enthusiast or perfectly steeped tea aficionado, these tours will expand your knowledge of local tea culture and give your taste buds something memorable to savor and treasure. A tour of the exhibition *Steeped in History: The Art of Tea* focusing on tea in the East is followed by a specially prepared luncheon at Jin Patisserie by chef and owner Kristy Choo. The day concludes with a tasting of aged and rare Chinese teas with purveyors 1001 Plateaus. Transportation included. \$60 for members; \$75 for non-members for 1 tour; \$110 for members; \$135 for non-members for both tours. See November 15 for second tour description. Reservations required: 310/825-8655.

Support provided by Santa Monica Mini Blue Bus.

November 1, 2009 11 am–2:30 pm

**Food Program: Sweet Tea and Sticky Rice**

Explore *Steeped in History: The Art of Tea* and *Grass Roots: African Origins of an American Art* with museum educator and chef Maite Gomez-Rejón. Discover the trade routes, beliefs, and stories related to tea and rice, from Asia to Africa through Europe to the United States. Then, inspired by the in-gallery conversation, cook and enjoy a meal that incorporates food from China, India, England, East Africa and the American South. \$40 members; \$50 non-members. Reservations required: 310/825-8655.

November 7, 2009 2 pm

**22nd Annual Sammy Yukuan Lee Lecture on Chinese Archaeology and Art: James A. Benn: The Buddhist Arts of Tea in Medieval China**

22nd Annual Sammy Yukuan Lee Lecture on Chinese Archaeology and Art Prior to the middle of the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE), tea was a beverage produced on a small scale and consumed locally by those who appreciated its refreshing and health-giving qualities. Beginning in the mid-8th century, it rose rapidly to become the drink of choice across the empire. James A. Benn, associate professor of Buddhism and East Asian Religions at McMaster University, explores the role of Buddhist ideas, institutions, and practitioners in the promotion of tea drinking and the invention of a Chinese tea culture. Co-sponsored by the Center for Chinese Studies.

November 12, 2009 6 pm

**Fowler Out Loud: UCLA Korean Music and Dance Ensemble**

The UCLA Korean Music and Dance Ensemble under the direction of professor Donald Kim will perform traditional court and folk music and dance.

November 14, 2009 2 pm and 3 pm

**Chanoyu Demonstrations**

Experience chado (the way of tea) at the Fowler. The Omote Senke School will demonstrate the Japanese tea ceremony most commonly referred to as chanoyu.

November 15, 2009 11:30 am–5:30 pm

**Fowler On the Town: The Big Chill**

Join Kulov, founder of the Annual Valentine's Tea Festival, for the second of two unique tea experiences in Los Angeles. A tour of *Steeped in History: The Art of Tea* focusing on tea in the West and a light lunch provided by Tudor House starts a day that includes a tea blending demo/workshop by Steve Schwartz, master blender and founder of the boutique import company The Art of Tea. Close the day with tea cocktails and light fare at stylish tea shop Algabar. Founder and certified tea expert Gail Baral will share ideas on how to use tea to add flavor and depth to your cooking and drinks. Transportation included. \$60 for members; \$75 non-members for 1 tour; \$110 for members; \$135 non-members for both tours. See October 25 for first tour description. Reservations required: 310/825-8655. Support provided by Santa Monica Mini Blue Bus.

November 15, 2009 1–4 pm

**Kids in the Courtyard: Mad Hatter Tea Party**

Don't be late for this very important date! You are invited to a Mad Hatter Tea Party in celebration of the exhibition *Steeped In History: The Art of Tea*. Come dressed as your favorite Alice in Wonderland character or decorate a crazy hat when you arrive. We'll be serving a variety of herbal teas and playing tea-inspired games.

November 19, 2009 6 pm

**Fowler Out Loud: Music of China Ensemble at UCLA**

The Music of China Ensemble directed by Chi Li presents an exciting traditional repertoire including Jiangnan silk and bamboo music and an aria from the Kun Opera.

November 22, 2009 2 pm

**Fowler OutSpoken Lecture with Morgan Pitelka: Tea of the Samurai in Times of War and Peace**

Occidental College professor and historian Morgan Pitelka examines how tea gatherings and collections of tea-related art played significant roles in the lives and careers of elite samurai between the 15th and 19th centuries. Samurai studied tea ritual, fetishized tea utensils, employed tea masters as diplomats and art connoisseurs, and came to understand immersion in tea culture as an opportunity for the cultivation of distinct warrior values.

Co-sponsored by the UCLA Asia Institute.