“Tōyō” (the Orient) was re-defined as a geocultural entity during the period of Japanese imperialism to distinguish the East from the West with Japan featured as the only advanced modern nation in the East to equal that in the West. While studies on Japanese imperialism have extensively examined how the discourse of “tōyō” was employed as ideological and political grounds to legitimize Japanese imperial expansion into Asia, this workshop considers the aesthetic consumption of “tōyō” in relation to the cultural formations of nation and empire building of Japan. In concert with its imperial aspirations, Japan asserted itself as the authority responsible for protecting Asia’s greatest artistic achievements from the West, and in the process promoted a new method of engagement with the arts and cultures of the Orient, leading to the proliferation of “tōyō shumi” (Oriental taste). However, the inherent contradiction in the discourse of “tōyō” complicated the mechanism of “tōyō shumi”. As the arts and artefacts of China, Korea, and Southeast Asia have long existed as an “internalized Other”, a foreign yet well established constituent of Japanese culture, “tōyō shumi” cannot be merely regarded in Orientalist alone that exoticized other parts of Asia. In addition, the concept of “nihon shumi” (Japanese taste) often manifested in the form of “tōyō shumi”. This workshop attempts to explore how imperial Japan’s ideological rhetoric of “tōyō” was appropriated and negotiated within various visual cultural practices and forms during the years of the Japanese empire.

The workshop is free and open to students and scholars interested in the subject. Registration is requested as seats are limited. Please contact the Sainsbury Institute to book your place: T: 01603-597-507 or E: sisjac@sainsbury-institute.org