

MULTIPLE VOICES, SHARED SPACE: THE LUSHUN RUSSO-JAPANESE PRISON AS A TRANSNATIONAL DIFFICULT HERITAGE



Mar 27



1:00 - 2:30PM



NAH 213



Yiyang Xiao is a PhD candidate in Anthropology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her research explores the Russian and Japanese colonial heritage of Lushun, focusing on how multi-layered and unresolved pasts haunt the contemporary city. She holds an MA (Distinction) from UCL and a BA from Nankai University, and was a visiting PhD at Humboldt University of Berlin. Yiyang is a coordinator for the ACHS Early Career Researchers Network. Her work is published or forthcoming in the *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *New Media & Society*, and *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Cultural Heritage and Conflict*.

This talk investigates the Lushun Russo-Japanese Prison Museum, a paradigmatic transnational difficult heritage site entwined in Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Russian histories. It challenges conventional approaches to contested memory by arguing the museum employs a dual curatorial strategy: deploying a powerful, state-sanctioned patriotic narrative for domestic Chinese audiences, while pragmatically using spatially segregated accommodations for key transnational visitors, notably Koreans. Through extensive ethnographic fieldwork (2023-2025), we demonstrate that this dual approach leads visitors primarily to seek affective validation of pre-existing national memories rather than initial learning. This strategy results in 'managed coexistence'—a difficult heritage in harmony achieved not through direct dialogue, but strategic narrative and spatial separation. The study contributes significantly to critical heritage studies by 1) questioning oversimplified monolithic views of Chinese difficult heritage, revealing pragmatic institutional negotiations; 2) highlighting segregation as a pivotal, often unacknowledged, curatorial strategy for navigating profound transnational dissonance; and 3) illuminating how memory is managed when direct reconciliation remains elusive, particularly in politically charged post-colonial contexts.

