



Left: The office of the Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (FMSH) in Paris, France. (Photo courtesy of the authors.)

The IIAS-FMSH Short-Term Intra-European Fellowship Program

Marta Craveri and Fabiana Di Paola

Created in 1963 by the historian Fernand Braudel, the *Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme* (FMSH) continues the original project, while adapting it to contemporary circumstances. The Fondation supports innovative and international research in humanities and social sciences, and it disseminates knowledge to the greatest number of people in order to respond to the major challenges facing our society. By supporting nearly 400 researchers from around the world each year and ensuring the

dissemination of a wide range of scientific resources, the FMSH is the largest humanities and social sciences foundation in France.

The FMSH has established a successful partnership with IIAS and since 2019, the IIAS-FMSH program is open to IIAS fellows whose work will benefit from spending a short-term residency in Paris. Selected IIAS fellows are hosted by the Fondation for a period of two months in the heart of Paris. We offer accommodation in the central

Maison Suger, networking opportunities, exposure with the French academia in Asian and other area studies, publishing services, access to academic libraries such as the *Bulac* with one of the richest collections on languages and civilizations that are not those of the Western world, as well as administrative support.

Thanks to the high-level profile of invited fellows from IIAS, the program has equally benefited the French research community of Asian Studies and beyond, which includes well-known institutions such as *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales*, *Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales*, *Université de Paris*, *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes* and *Collège de France*. Designed to further enhance the intra-European circulation of researchers in Asian Studies, the IIAS-FMSH partnership contributes to decompartmentalizing knowledge and multiplying perspectives to enrich the field of knowledge.

Marta Craveri, FMSH, France
Fabiana Di Paola, FMSH, France

"The FMSH provided an excellent milieu to connect with the wider academic community in Paris through South Asian, Himalayan, and Burma/Southeast Asian research centers, where I presented papers and attended seminars. It has been a good base for me to connect with archives and museums for research materials. At the FMSH, I could meet scholars beyond Asian Studies, working on ethnomusicology in Northern Africa or Eurasian Semiotics, which was refreshing. Finally, the lovely FMSH staff, working facilities, and accommodation, all located in the heart of Paris, have made the experience of work and research here very pleasurable."

—Aditya Kiran Kakati, Associate Research Fellow, International Institute for Asian Studies, IIAS, Leiden and FMSH 2023 Research Fellow. He is also Early-Postdoctoral Mobility Fellow, Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and SOAS, London University.

Doing Museum Studies with IIAS

Mariko Murata

I am writing this short contribution in Turin, Italy. I am visiting for 16 days to work with the Museum of Oriental Art and University of Turin, as part of a collaboration with the IIAS. While the IIAS regularly develops collaborations and networks with global institutions, this is the first time working with these particular ones. While I am honoured to be the very first 'delegate', I also feel an immense sense of responsibility.

I have been a Fellow at the IIAS for almost nine months. This year, I took a sabbatical from the university I am affiliated to. The leave gave me the opportunity to concentrate on my research, and I was accepted at the IIAS for a fellowship (as a senior researcher without a stipend). Since my arrival in Leiden last October, I have come to appreciate the excellent research and networking opportunities at the IIAS.

From day one, I felt comfortable due to its welcoming and open atmosphere. I enjoy the company of other Fellows in discussions and debates (or simply chats). We learn about others' work through conversations and 'Inspiration Sessions' that are held on a frequent basis. In fact, I feel that I knew nothing about Asia's dynamics earlier.

In addition, the environment at the IIAS and the process of constantly rediscovering Asia both help me to imagine the reality through both the Western and non-Western contexts, which is the relationship that I am concentrating on at the moment.

My research focuses on the issue of 'museums and decolonisation'. Here, I use the term 'decolonisation' in the broadest sense. Decolonisation not only concerns colonialism but also the decentring of Eurocentric views and narratives and deconstruction of the gaze towards the Other. The Netherlands is

the ideal location for me to pursue this topic as Dutch museums are now trying to address this problem using various approaches.

A major topic concerning decolonisation is the issue of repatriation. This is already underway in several museums in the Netherlands, and those who have not started it state that they will return the objects if the evidence of the loot is confirmed. The issue of restitution is critical. However, my primary focus is on how museums approach the issue through their exhibits and programs involving the public. Exhibits and programs are a means of communication; by engaging in decolonisation through the museums' daily activities, they could open up conversations with the wider (and global) public and receive both positive and negative responses.

Museums are colonial institutions in origin. This coloniality cannot be easily deconstructed as it is deeply enmeshed in modern museum systems. Therefore, it is even more crucial for museums, that also identify themselves as places for learning, to challenge and question their own institutions and mediate discussions.

I typically conduct my research in two ways. One method is to observe the museum by visiting as part of the general public.

Investigating the museum from visitors' eyes can help capture several things, from subtle changes to drastic transformations, in an unbiased manner. Another method is conducting fieldwork and interviews with the museum. The IIAS and its collaborators provided me with invaluable opportunities to work in/with the museum.

The conventional approach is being discontinued at the Museum of Oriental Art in Turin. It appointed a new director last year, and his expertise in commissioning artworks, programs, and performances of international artists has shed new light on the collections and exhibits, subtly sliding the narrative and gaze that were firmly set upon them. Here, the museum space mediates the process of deconstructing its own coloniality and/or Orientalism. While noticing this new direction, I realized why the museum accepted me when it knew of my critical observations on museums. I hope that my perspective and opinion as an outsider will 'help' it reidentify and understand itself better.

The Italian case undoubtedly adds another perspective to my research in the Netherlands. As I process all that I have seen, I am still trying to observe as much as possible during my stint at the IIAS.



The Museum of Oriental Art (MAO) in Turin, Italy (left) along with (right) a guided tour by the educator in the Japanese gallery of the Museum. (Photos courtesy of Mariko Murata, 2023)