Monday, 12 October 2015
“Cosmopolitan Culture in Imperial Japan”
Dr Jordan Sand, Georgetown University, in collaboration with the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures

Abstract:
“Culture” had a special valence in Japan and Korea during the 1920s. In terms like “culturalism,” “the cultured life” and “culture houses,” the concept of culture pointed toward a utopian ideal of transcendent cosmopolitan values. Yet as soon as these values were given concrete expression, they were also drawn into the vortex of consumer capitalism. When viewed in the frame of a world doubly configured by colonial empires and consumer capitalism, the fashion for “cultured” goods—together with the satire that followed in its wake—demands anew to be taken seriously. This presentation will return to some of the ideas and images in House and Home in Modern Japan (2004) to consider the possibilities and the limits of cosmopolitanism in an age of empire.

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