

# 東亞藝術史

毎功是

Lecture on Tuesday, June 16, 2009, 6:15 pm

Melissa McCormick, Harvard University

## “Becoming a Woman” in Sixteenth-century Japan: Overcoming the Buddhist Paradigm of Male Transfor- mation (*henjō nanshi* 變成男子) through Text and Image

### Abstract:

This talk examines a sixteenth-century narrative picture scroll entitled “The New Chamberlain” (*Shinkurodo monogatari*), which relates the tale of a young woman who, desiring the freedoms only afforded to men, disguises herself as a young boy and enters court service at the imperial palace as the new Chamberlain. On the surface, this illustrated tale resembles a typical courtly romance in the classical mode of cross-dressing intrigue. A more thorough reading, however, reveals that the cross-dressing trope here functions as a metaphor for one of the most central concerns of women related to Buddhist doctrine: the necessity of women to be reborn as the opposi-tesex and gender in order to achieve salvation. The paper will demonstrate how the creators of this work carefully orchestrated its texts and images to assert a unique interpretation concerning the possibility and nature of female spiritual awakening.



late fifteenth-century Kyoto. McCormick's current research examines the tradition of ink-line (*hakubyō*) narrative painting and its association with communities of female readers and artists, topics that are at the heart of this lecture.

Melissa McCormick is the John L. Loeb Associate Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University. Her scholarly interests include the relationship of pictorial form to social history and contexts of artistic production. She focuses particularly on narrative handscrolls and the interrelationship of text and image in the medieval period. Her forthcoming book published by University of Washington Press *Tosa Mitsunobu and the Small Scroll in Medieval Japan* studies the relationship of scale and format to pictorial representation and literary genre, while providing a social and cultural history of aristocratic society in

Seminar room, third floor, Institute of East Asian Art History, Seminarstr. 4, 69117 Heidelberg.

RUPRECHT-KARLS-  
UNIVERSITÄT  
HEIDELBERG



Heidelberg University · Centre for East Asian Studies  
Institute of East Asian Art History · Seminarstraße 4 · 69117 Heidel-  
berg · Tel.: 06221 - 54 23 52 · sekretariat-iko@zo.uni-heidelberg.de  
<http://iko.uni-hd.de>