

Shifting Materialities in Post-Socialist Kazakshtan

This talk considers the different ways in which multiple materialities can co-exist. It considers how small everyday actions are implicated in relation to monumental changes such as the rise and fall of socialism and the processes of post socialist transition. I address this question from the perspective of material register. I want to use examples from the recent past to suggest how this works from the Russian revolution and Soviet history and relate them more specifically to new material forms and material registers emerging in post-socialist Kazakhstan. In particular I want to examine the shifting statuses and materialities suggested by the 'shanyrak' or smoke hole grille of the Kazakh yurt and its transubstantiation from architectural element, to embodied gesture, to state symbol, with the aim of understanding how different registers sustain social life.