



Psychedelics and the Crisis of Psychiatric Medicine

An anthropological lecture by Nicolas Langlitz

Friday, 12 May at 7:00 p.m.

Hong Kong Museum of History

Lecture Hall, Ground Floor, 100 Chatham Road South, Tsim Sha Tsui

All are welcome! Space, however, is limited to 110 seats.

The lecture is conducted in English.

Since no genuinely new drugs for the treatment of mental illness had been successfully developed for decades, major pharmaceutical corporations in the 2010s decided to dramatically reduce investments in research on mental health medicines. In parallel to this crisis in psychopharmacology, however, one branch of research began to boom. Drug regulators in the United States declared psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy a breakthrough therapy and hundreds of start-up companies began to compete for this potentially emerging healthcare market. This talk looks at the case of psychedelic research to examine three responses to the innovation crisis: (1) the resumption of using pharmaceutical drugs with psychotherapy as a half-century-old but previously discontinued practice; (2) the continuation of self-experimentation as a simultaneously repressed and revitalized method of drug development; and (3) computational drug design as a cutting-edge approach used to create non-psychedelic psychedelics without mind-altering effects. These responses point to conflicting imaginaries of innovation that envisage the future of mental health medicines and thereby provide different diagnoses of its current predicament.

Nicolas Langlitz is an anthropologist and historian of science studying epistemic cultures of the mind and life sciences. He is the author of *Neuropsychedelica* (University of California Press) and *Chimpanzee Culture Wars* (Princeton University Press) and leads the Psychedelic Humanities Lab at the New School for Social Research in New York where he is also Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology.

For more information, please contact Stan Dyer on 9746 9537 or anthrohk@gmail.com
www.cuhk.edu.hk/ant/hkas, www.facebook.com/hkanthro, @HKASTalks

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