

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION  
The University of Michigan  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Joan Kee, associate professor of history of art, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of history of art, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2008	Institute of Fine Arts, New York University
J.D.	2000	Harvard Law School
B.A.	1997	Yale University

Professional Record:

2014 – present	Associate Professor, Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan
2008 – 2014	Assistant Professor, Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan
2006	Visiting Lecturer, Department of the History of Art and Visual Studies, Cornell University
2001 – 2003	Associate Attorney, Simpson Thacher and Bartlett, New York and Hong Kong
2000 – 2001	Associate Attorney, Hughes Hubbard and Reed, New York

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Kee is a respected instructor with admirably high standards. Student scores and comments show that she successfully pushes students to achieve. Her teaching portfolio includes an introductory “Arts of Asia” course that meets LSA’s Race and Ethnicity requirement, as well as an innovative upper-level undergraduate course. She regularly develops new courses addressing topical social issues and evolving student needs, including a course on “Global Politics and Contemporary Art,” an interdisciplinary seminar on “Emojis,” and a soon to be released course on Afro-Asian artistic engagements that will enhance the department’s diversity, equity, and inclusion offerings. Professor Kee is a superlative mentor to graduate students, who positions her students to be competitive in applications for grants and posts in academe and museums. As the director of graduate studies (2015-2017), she taught a one-credit seminar entitled “Arts Advocacy in Detroit and Beyond,” aiding in Rackham’s efforts to introduce students to alternative careers by giving them an opportunity to meet arts professionals.

Research – Professor Kee has consolidated her position as a leading figure in modern and contemporary art studies, with a commanding expertise in Asian art. Hers is a global art history in the best sense of the word, broad in geographical framing, yet rigorously grounded in historical and cultural particularity. New in her scholarship is the investigation of art and law as “integrated sources of creative thinking,” published in a series of well-received articles and in her forthcoming book, Models of Integrity: Art and Law in Post-Sixties America. This work is regarded as pioneering and groundbreaking, and promises to stand as a field-defining first.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Models of Integrity: Art and Law in Post-Sixties America, University of California Press, forthcoming February 2019.

“Towards law as an artistic medium: William E. Jones’ Tearoom,” *Journal of Law, Culture and the Humanities*, 12(3), 2016, pp. 693-715.

“Art before the law: The case of Yoko Ono’s rape,” *Law and Literature*, 28(2), 2016, pp. 187-208.

“The measure of the world: Scenes from a journey to Kaesŏng,” *Art History*, 38(2), 2015, pp. 364-385.

Service – Professor Kee served as the director of graduate studies for two years, admirably increasing the pool and acceptance rate of diversity candidates. She simultaneously served as a member of her department’s Executive Committee. Professor Kee currently serves as the chair of the search committee for a position in “Arts of the Americas” and as a member of the Diversity Committee. For the university, she provides leadership as the deputy director of the Nam Center for Korean Studies. In the wider community, she sits on many advisory panels, editorial boards, and juries, and serves as a curatorial consultant for exhibitions.

External Reviews:

Reviewer (A)

“What impresses me most, beyond the volume of her work, is its equally exceptional range opening out from her core area of modern Korea (and East Asia more generally) to older Korean art (in one of her best essays) to the more recent direction that takes advantage of her legal training.”

Reviewer (B)

“Unlike many ‘second books,’ which prolong and often entrench a scholar’s command of one particular field, Kee’s book reads as a genuinely fresh departure for her. One can feel the author’s excitement in ferretting [sic] out new stories and tying up their complicated threads.”

Reviewer (C)

“The forthcoming book *Models of Integrity*...is a fascinating addition to modern and contemporary art studies and a significant contribution to the literature surrounding it. Discussing the ways in which contemporary art provokes and unsettles established legal categories and ‘the structuring capacity of law,’ this book offers valuable insights into an under-explored area—especially valuable because Kee is herself an historian of contemporary art and so well aware of art’s complexities and pressure points.”

Reviewer (D)

“I was particularly impressed by the text she co-authored which was very helpful to me in my own research on the insignificant – and usually small – detail. In addition, her ongoing research on Afro-Asian artists shows her continued commitment to cutting edge research outside mainstream narratives.”

Reviewer (E)

“In an era of vigorous, contested and challenging debates around issues of ‘globalisation,’ ‘contemporaneity’ and inter-disciplinarity in the visual arts, she has made her mark as a highly intelligent, original and informed scholar, seeking to develop conceptual languages that enable her as a modernist to work with art from multiple geographical and cultural sources. She grapples carefully and robustly with the theoretical, methodological and practical contradictions that arise from her interests, producing nuanced and thoughtful research publications.”

Reviewer (F)

“In both her research and her teaching statements, Kee emphasizes her commitment to close readings of works of art as a foundation upon which her scholarly inquiry is built.”

Reviewer (G)

“...Contemporary Asian art...is a highly unstable category and in her essay on contemporary Southeast Asian art for the catalogue of 2016 Singapore Biennale, she boldly claims that contemporary Asian art has become an ‘exhausted trope.’ Instead, in this writing, which is a far more substantive piece than is typical of the biennale catalogue genre, she argues for newer models of regionalism based on informal, causal connections outside political boundaries. ...she explores the potential of new media for resource sharing and encourages the growth of alternative institutions and archives.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Kee’s case for promotion rests not only on her productivity and her unusual scholarly range and depth, but also on her demonstrable impact in the art historical field. She is a rigorous and imaginative teacher and a conscientious mentor of students, and a colleague who makes substantive contributions to the department, the university, and the field. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Joan Kee be promoted to the rank of professor of history of art, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



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Elizabeth R. Cole, Interim Dean  
Professor of Women’s Studies, Psychology,  
and Afroamerican and African Studies,  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

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