



Universität
Zürich ^{UZH}

Visualizing Taste

Prof. Dr. Ai Hisano, University of Tokyo



Monday, June 20, 2022, 18:00–19:00

Universität Zürich, Rämistrasse 59, 8001 Zürich

Room RAA-G-15

This lecture will be held in English and is open to the public (no registration is necessary).

The event is organized and supported by the Swiss-Japanese Society.



Schweizerisch-Japanische Gesellschaft
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Abstract:

Business has shaped our sensory experiences of the world. In the late nineteenth century food manufacturers, flavorists, and perfumers in the industrialized world began experimenting with new technologies to measure, define, and standardize something seemingly personal and intangible—the senses. The creation of such new sensations was an important, and much neglected, dimension in the evolution of modern capitalism. Ai Hisano will discuss the creation of this brave new world of the senses by focusing on the use of color as a key driver of demand in the food industry in early-twentieth-century Japan. She explores how the Westernization of Japanese food culture, industrialization, and the rise of consumer society altered visual environments in the country.



Ai Hisano is Associate Professor at the Interfaculty Initiative in Information Studies/Graduate School of Interdisciplinary Information Studies at the University of Tokyo, Japan. She specializes in cultural and business history; studies in capitalism; the long-term development of technology; and the history of the senses.

After earning her PhD in 2016, she served as a Newcomen Postdoctoral Fellow in Business History at Harvard Business School (2016–17), and taught at the Graduate School of Economics at Kyoto University (2017–2021) before taking on her present position. She has published widely on the connection between food culture and business. Her recent book publication *Visualizing Taste: How Business Changed the Look of What You Eat* (Harvard University Press, 2019) won the 2020 Hagley Prize in Business History (Business History Conference) and the 2020 Shimizu Hiroshi Book Award (Japanese Association for American Studies). The book explores the role of business in shaping culinary and sensory experiences from the 1870s to the 1970s in the USA. It analyzes the development of visual appeal, particularly color, as a key driver of demand in the food industry.