2014 E. Gene Smith Book Prize
China and Inner Asia Council
Association for Asian Studies

Winner: Clare E. Harris
The Museum on the Roof of the World: Art, Politics, and the Representation of Tibet
University of Chicago Press, 2012

In The Museum on the Roof of the World: Art, Politics, and the Representation of Tibet, Clare Harris treats us to a beautifully written, carefully documented, and pleasantly devious sally into the troubled currents and feedbacks linking Tibetans, British imperialists, Chinese communists, and, in the post-Mao, post-modern art world, Tibetans again, through the sharing and appropriation of images.

Harris is a canny and subtle interpreter of this visual culture, its intended messages and inadvertent innuendos. Full of brilliant and illustrative stories uncovered by thorough archival work and intimate knowledge of the relevant sources and collections, The Museum on the Roof of the World explores the various techniques instrumentalized by the imperial powers of Great Britain and China to control their colonies, as well as others’ knowledge of them, by the dislocation and appropriation of artifacts, and the effective transformation of the colonized society into a museum.

In this mature work of scholarship, whose imagistic riches should open one’s eyes to fresh perspectives in the interpretation of contemporary culture, Clare Harris achieves that rare contribution in which the reader discovers new learning while reveling in the delights of a page-turner.

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Philadelphia, March 28, 2014