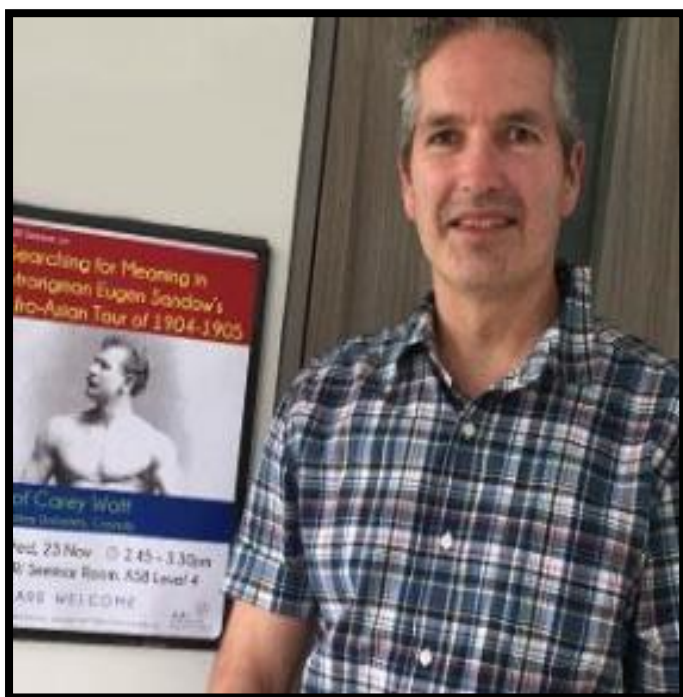


Dr. Carey Watt

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Research Topic: More than Muscle: Eugen Sandow's Tour of India in 1904-05



Dr. Carey Watt spent time in Asia retracing the steps of Anglo-German bodybuilder and fitness expert Eugen Sandow who had spent time in there as part of his world tour at the turn of the 20th century.

During his recent sabbatical in the latter half of 2016, history professor Carey Watt embarked on a journey that took him across the globe to New Delhi, Kolkata, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

He was following the footsteps of Anglo-German bodybuilder and fitness expert Eugen Sandow who had spent time in those cities as part of his world

tour at the turn of the 20th century.

At the time, Sandow was the world's "perfect man." He is now perhaps best known as the founder of the modern bodybuilding movement.

Dr. Watt hoped to learn more about Sandow's influence and legacy in Asia. That meant countless hours digging through local libraries, archives, and museums in India, Singapore, and Hong Kong to collect information about Sandow's activities and reception during his tour.

He also delivered papers on Sandow at Jadavpur University in India and at the Asia Research Institute (ARI) of the National University of Singapore.

Watt's research trip was funded by a **Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute (SICI) Shastri Research Grant** and a General Research Grant from the STU Research Office.

Some of the new research has just recently been published: a chapter on "Sandow's Natural Healing" in *Global Anti-Vice Activism, 1890-1950: Fighting Drinks, Drugs, and*

“Immorality” (Cambridge University Press, 2016) and an article titled “Eugen Sandow in Colonial India, 1904-1905” in the International Journal of the History of Sport (February 2017). More is in the works.

Watt’s interest in Sandow first started while he was doing his PhD.

“I had touched on the history of “physical culture” in Indian Boy Scout troops and schools, including the influence of the “Indian Sandow” – Professor Ramamurti Naidu. I then found out that the real Sandow – Eugen Sandow – had visited India but no one knew much about his trip, who he met, how he was received, and his legacy.”

That’s when Watt was inspired to dig up more information about Sandow’s world tour. He headed to India in August for in-depth research, exploring the meaning of Sandow’s eight-month tour of India in 1904-1905 in a context of rising Indian nationalism and changing Asian-European relations during the Russo-Japanese War.

“I was looking at how Indians (athletes and non-athletes) and colonial officials and non-officials understood Sandow,” Watt explained. “I was also investigating Sandow’s fascinating legacy in India – in physical culture (building bodily strength and health), bodybuilding, and popular culture, including having the sleeveless undershirt named ‘Sando ganjee’ to this day.”

In November, Watt spent two weeks doing research in Singapore and Hong Kong.

“It was a reconnaissance trip to investigate what kind of material is in archives and libraries in Singapore and Hong Kong that might shed light on Sandow’s trip, and how his performances and message were received by local Chinese, Malay, Indian and European populations. Thus far my research and writing on Sandow has focused on India, and this trip was an attempt to turn it into a broader Asian and global project.”

Back in Fredericton, Watt is excited to bring Sandow with him into the classroom. He says Sandow is a fun and visually stimulating topic, so it’s useful to bring him to class to illustrate certain themes and issues.

“It’s interesting that we can take a seemingly minor and unimportant figure – in terms of conventional history – and use him or her as a lens to generate important insights into big topics like the history of colonialism, nationalism, globalization, sport and representations of gender and the male body. As the Indian writer Pankaj Mishra has stated, ‘the lines of history intersect in individual lives,’ and this was particularly true in the case of Eugen Sandow!”

For more information on the project, please contact: Prof. Carey Watt at: cwatt@stu.ca