

## **ABSTRACTS**

# Day 2 | Friday, October 13

## Panel #1

### Temples and Texts- in honor of M. A. Dhaky

Chair: Adam Hardy (*Cardiff University*)

Discussant: Michael W Meister (*University of Pennsylvania*)

Architectural practice in South Asia has been accompanied by a plethora of 'canonical' treatises since the early medieval period. Temples loom largely in these texts. Engagement with a *vāstuśāstra* was the basis of Ram Raz's 1834 *Essay on the Architecture of the Hindus*, but subsequent scholarship has largely steered clear of the textual dimension. Towards the mid-20th century, traditional architectural practitioners in India initiated their own published discourses in parallel, and to some extent symbiotically, with the academic ones. M. A. Dhaky was instrumental in this exchange from the 1960s onwards. Dhaky played a pivotal role in refining the classification of temple forms, establishing an appropriate Sanskrit terminology, and in studying *vāstu* texts diachronically. Subsequent developments that build on these achievements are reaching an important stage. The aim of this panel is to take stock of these and explore the many remaining questions about how texts and practice relate.

### Rhythm, in Verse and Architecture

Libbie Mills (*University of Toronto*)

The *Aparājitaṭṭhā*, dated by Dhaky to the latter half of the 12th century, is a compendium that draws on materials from multiple texts, including the *Samarāṅgaasūtradhāra* and *Jayaṭṭhā* (Dhaky 1961). It serves as a thorough presentation of architectural theory, encompassing domestic, ritual and civic constructions. At Chapter 67, titled *śāstracchandānirayaḥ*, an apparent departure of topic is made, to present the matter of *chandas*, metre, in verse. The departure is understood when, in the following chapter, number 68, titled *ṣaṭchandanirayādhikāraḥ*, the idea of *chandas* in building is discussed. Here, a word usually thought of in terms of the rhythm of verse, is being used instead to denote the rhythm, as it were, of the building. We are told that there are six building rhythms, six patterns of built design or style. The paper will discuss the idea of metre in building as presented in the *Aparājitaṭṭhā* and other texts on architecture. Importantly, the paper will ask: What does the set of six rhythms set out at *Aparājitaṭṭhā* 68 really mean? And how useful is that grouping, in the *Aparājitaṭṭhā* and elsewhere?

(Reference: M.A. Dhaky, *Journal of the Oriental Institute* Vol. 10(3), pp.226-234, Baroda, 1961)

## Planned Passings: Con-textualizing Cremation and Iconologies of Death

Tamara Sears (*Rutgers University*)

In ancient and medieval Hinduism, the moment of death has long been understood as crucial to the attainment of spiritual liberation. Rituals were performed to ease the soul's journey, beginning with the moment of passing and extending beyond the act of cremation. Such rites are well known from Sanskrit sources. While religious manuals have detailed the correct order for performing rituals, courtly literature has treated the cremation grounds as a gory space populated by blood-thirsty gods, ghosts, jackals, and Tantric ascetics in order to evoke the emotional response of *bībhatsa rasa*, or the feeling of aversion, revulsion, and disgust. Presented as a homage to M.A. Dhaky's remarkable ability to bring together rigorous architectural and iconographic analysis with a deep knowledge of texts, this paper examines a group of medieval temples that seem initially to be unconnected but that come together around the fact that they all likely stood at cremation grounds. To make the case, I combine analysis of architectural programs and an attentiveness to geography with readings of literary works and architectural treatises on town planning, including many that were initially brought to the forefront in Dhaky's vast corpus of publications.

## Modernity, Texts and Temple Makers

Megha Chand Inglis (*Cardiff University*)

When contemporary temple makers from the Sompura community of Gujarat narrate design strategies for their temples—both within India and on global platforms—the use of *vāstusāstra* texts forms a constant presence in their narratives. The 1930s and 1960s, in particular, were moments when, in parallel with the art history world of scholars like Ananda Coomaraswamy, Stella Kramrisch, and later M. A. Dhaky, a burst of densely illustrated Gujarati publications aimed at regional temple architects emerged through the efforts of N. M. Sompura and P. O. Sompura.

Studies on contemporary temple makers tend to obscure the presence of modern mythologies of time in favour of ritualised modes of production, without fully considering what is at stake for the community itself. These modern day Sompura publications, on the other hand, draw our attention to the creative straddling of historical consciousness with everyday and ahistorical notions of time. Oscillating between the contingent use of texts, through a case study in the U.K., and a sense of community identity consolidated through modern day *vāstusāstra*, this paper will explore how the subaltern practices of the Sompuras have translated the modern knowledge systems of 'history' and 'antiquity' into their own life worlds.

## IN MEMORIAM

### M. A. Dhaky

(July 31, 1927 –  
July 29, 2016)



Madhusudan A. Dhaky loved orchids, bajarikas, temples, gem stones, science fiction, gamikas ornaments and grace. In his passing we lose a devotee and guide, teacher and friend. Libraries hold his writings; we who worked closely with him hold close his heart. He connected worlds of things with his curiosity and passions. We share his memory in his work; his life in our friendship; his future in generations of scholars and artists to come.

I think of the tambura-drone he had made in Varanasi, ornamented with Ajanta's vines, as foundation for his tentative and exquisite vocal lessons. As an 'amateur'—a disciplined lover—let him sing now for us in our memories and through his scholarship, we of many faiths and disciplines only beginning to absorb the richness of his songs. His company remains for us to share.

--Michael Meister

## Panel #2

### Defining the Portrait in South Asia: Form & Function

Chairs: Krista Gulbransen (*Whitman College*) & Murad Khan Mumtaz (*University of Virginia*)

In his 1939 essay "The Traditional Conception of Ideal Portraiture," A. K. Coomaraswamy delineates the conceptual disparities between Rajput and Mughal figural representation, describing them respectively as "posthumous, hieratic, and ideal on the one hand, and taken from life, profane, and sentimental on the other." Though recent scholarship has challenged this binary, Coomaraswamy's broad definition of portraiture, moving beyond notions of mimesis and naturalism, continues to influence studies of the genre. In the absence of a singular set of aesthetic standards, current definitions of the genre often emphasize the social function of the portrait over notions of likeness. The papers in this panel explore the shifting aesthetics and historical contingency of portraits in South Asia by interrogating existing definitions of portraiture and proposing new models for studying the genre.

#### **The role of portraiture at the court of Aurangzeb 'Alamgir (r.1658-1707)**

Malini Roy (*The British Library*)

Historical and dynastic portraiture in Mughal art has been informative in our understanding of the role of imperial patronage primarily during the reigns of Akbar and his successors, Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Due to the emphasis by scholars on the great illustrated manuscript and painting traditions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the historiography of Mughal art has marginalized the tradition of painting during the reign of the puritanical emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707). While there is a general misconception that Aurangzeb banned historical paintings, a chronological review of key portraits casts a new light on his role as a patron. Furthermore, a revised reading of Bhavanidas' great durbar scene featuring Aurangzeb and his courtiers offers insight into the use of portraiture to document in perpetuity the ambitions and achievements of the inner circle of ministers as compared to that of the emperor.

#### **Between the Portrait and the Devotional Image: The Representation of Guru Nanak, the Founder of Sikhism**

Atsushi Ikeda (*SOAS*)

Today, single portraits representing Guru Nanak are very popular among Sikhs and are frequently hung on the walls of Sikh households and temples. The original painting of the most popular Guru Nanak prints, Guru Nanak in an Ashirwad pose, was depicted in the 1960s. This Guru Nanak image originates in the late nineteenth century portrait, *Guru Nanak Dressed in an Inscribed Robe*, judging from the application of a three quarter face to his iconography. It is assumed that this portrait was meant to be placed on a wall because of its approximate double scale and the paper attachments on the reverse side that act as a support. The influences of European portraits and Christian icons on this work are presumed. Apart from its Western influence, the portrait may be somewhat affected by Hindu customs of icon making. The diffusion of Guru Nanak's portraits with a distinct iconography seems to have helped to shape the modern Sikh identity. The following investigation of the contemporary use of Guru Nanak's portraits tells us what a portrait is in general and how it works in the society.

## Hyperreal Clay Portraiture in Colonial Bengal

Susan Bean (*Peabody Essex Museum, emerita*)

In about 1820, a clay sculptor in Calcutta mṛtshilpi produced a group of life-size portraits that were acquired by an American mariner and donated to the Salem East India Marine Society (now the Peabody Essex Museum). The best preserved of these depicts a Vaiṣav devotee in hyperrealistic style. The technique of construction—clay layered over a straw core—indicates a sculptor schooled in Bengal's lineage-based practice of modeling ritual images and festival figures in clay.

During the decades around 1800 in Calcutta and other cities and towns with substantial colonial presence, naturalistic/ocular realism in painting and sculpture set down deep roots becoming integral to elite and vernacular arts across the region. Most discussions of the style focus on British-commissioned painting by erstwhile court artists schooled in European painting and drawing by their patrons. In this paper, I consider hyperreal clay portraiture in the context of shifting practices in colonial Bengal, giving particular attention to the nature of the relationship between imagery in clay and the personage represented. My aim is to reconsider ocular realism as part of regional culture and resituate portraiture in relation to the region's range of representational practices.

## Making Copies: The Repetition and the Portrait

Rebecca M. Brown (*Johns Hopkins University*)

As the Viceroy's New Delhi residence was under construction, Edwin Lutyens bemoaned the lack of portraiture: "There is no Queen Victoria! No King Edward or Queen Alexandra!" His staff asked Viceregal houses across India to send paintings to Delhi. Most refused; some sent photographs so that copies might be made. After independence, the portraits of the presidents that line the State Dining Room, as well as other important figures in post-1947 politics, were commissioned from Indian artists including modernists Biren De and G. R. Santosh. These were also duplicates, as they were painted from photographs.

I explore the question of the copy, the duplicate, and the reproduction in the particular case of portraiture for the Viceregal and then Presidential residence—in painting and sculpture, copied from painting, sculpture, and photographs. Because portraiture engages with mimesis, a conceptual frame very much in play in studies of colonial and imperial relations of power (Bhabha, Taussig, Eaton), the physical copying and duplication that takes place in a context of an imperial and then national site provides an exciting space within which one might think about the portrait's fungibility as it both participates in and slips out of the bounds of representation

## Panel#3

### Between: Agencies, Objects and Architecture

Chair: Ajay Sinha (*Mt. Holyoke*)

Papers in this panel seek to uncover agents of cultural meaning-making in previously overlooked sites by taking unconventional paths. Through Adamjee's careful reading, a silver bowl tells us about the issues of identity among the Parsis community it served. Sardar inquires on the nature of female patronage by examining buildings associated with a queen in Golconda. Heston finds active Portuguese inputs in a Keralan palace, while a hitherto little known artist book leads Gupta to historicize the modernism discourse in a new light.

#### **Ancient Persia Meets Colonial India on a Zoroastrian Silver Bowl**

Qamar Adamjee (*SF Asian Art Museum*)

This paper explores the hybrid community identity of India's Zoroastrians (Parsis) as it finds expression in their art and architectural patronage. Having migrated from Iran to India in the 8th-9th centuries, this minority community maintained a low profile in the littoral region of Gujarat for nearly a thousand years. But by the 1870s, the British-system educated Parsis of Bombay were prominent among the city's cosmopolitan "merchant princes." Through the lens of an intriguing late-19th century Indian silver bowl showing scenes of important Achaemenid and Sasanian rock the bowl's decorative program. The paper asks and addresses questions of why the Indian Parsis chose to articulate their distinctive religious and cultural identity through pre-Islamic Persian imagery and how the selected scenes—from two remote sites located at the opposite ends of Iran—came to be represented with relatively high accuracy by Indian silversmiths. It reveals interconnections across broad cultural and chronological spans: between ancient Persia, colonial Bombay, and Qajar Iran through the agencies of individuals and their personal relationships, exchanges of knowledge and material culture that were linked by land and sea routes.

#### **Hayat Bakhshi Begum: The Role of a Female Patron in the Development of Golconda Architecture**

Marika Sardar (*Museum of Islamic Art*)

Thanks to recent advancement in the study of the Qutb Shahi dynasty of Golconda, a clearer picture of the sultans and their individual interests has started to emerge. Missing from consideration is a key figure from the ruling family: the queen Hayat Bakhshi Begum (d.1666). Hayat Bakhshi Begum was the daughter, wife, or mother of three sultans of the Qutb Shahi dynasty and was a powerful figure on the political scene of the Deccan for over forty years. During this time she did not remain behind the scenes. We can find evidence of her power as expressed in her shrewd sponsorship of monuments in Golconda and in the suburbs of Hyderabad. This paper will consider the monuments associated with Hayat Bakhshi Begum in terms of style and function as they are critical to the development of the type of decoration we most closely associate with Qutb Shahi architecture. In addition, the paper will examine her buildings in the context of the public works sponsored by other members of the court, analyze their use in royal ceremonial (especially the eponymous settlement of Hayatnagar), and put forth an argument for the nature of female patronage in seventeenth century India.

## **A Palace on the Littoral: Mattanceri Kovilakam in Kochi: On the Threshold of a New Era**

Mary Beth Heston (*College of Charleston*)

Kochi emerged as a major port of the Malabar Coast, on the Arabian Sea, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It was here that two years after the arrival of Vasco da Gama in 1498 Pedro Alvares Cabral, representing the king of Portugal, established one of the earliest permanent European relationships with a South Asian ruler in 1500. In 1503, Portugal secured permission from Goda Varma, the Raja of Kochi, to build a fort (Fort Manuel, better known as Fort Cochin) adjacent to the king's palace that overlooked the port. Half a century later, the Portuguese presented a new Kochi Raja with a new palace, situated in the "native town" of Mattanceri, Mattanceri Kovilakam. While I have long held that Mattanceri is in many ways an anomaly in the context of local architecture but has much in common with fifteenth and sixteenth-century architecture in Lisbon and Goa, fresh evidence has convinced me that Mattanceri is essentially a Portuguese residence. The "discovery" of two doorways carved in the Manueline style speaks not only to the degree of Portuguese involvement, but also to Mattanceri Kovilakam as marking the threshold of a new era in the region.

## **The Anti-fascist Photomontage in Interwar India**

Atreyee Gupta (*UC Berkeley*)

In the backdrop of a world veering precariously close to the Second World War, the Bengali artist Abanindranath Tagore began a manuscript, an artists' book of sorts, based on the Ramayana. 207 collages, which combined photographs, cinema reviews, advertisements, and typography from contemporary newspapers, accompanied the artist's handwritten text. As the first collage by an Indian artist, the project opens up the history and historiography of twentieth-century art to several compelling questions. The collages belonged to a new register of modernist aesthetic thought and practice, one that reworked the illustrative presence of documentary photography to enunciate a utopian, post-imperial global horizon. The promise of modernism, the talk contends, remained obdurately lodged within this utopian imagination of an egalitarian future, a future that lay beyond the limits of the interwar world order. In the collages, the aspiration for, and the expectation of, sovereignty thus assumed discursive and material form in an anti-realist aesthetic that closely approximated a utopian vision for a post-imperial political future. Anti-realist because, expectation withstanding, this post-imperial future was not yet actualized in any real dimension. Modernism, then, was the name of that which gave this global post-imperial future shape in a still colonized interwar present.

## Panel#4

### Not All at Sea: Material Histories on Oceanic Thresholds

Chairs: Sylvia Houghteling (*Bryn Mawr College*) and Dipti Khera (*New York University*)

The people, objects, and texts that traversed the waters and the frontiers of the Indian Ocean defy multiple boundaries—spatial, ontological, and technological. Moreover, the merchants, pilgrims, scholars, and messengers who navigated the ports of South Asia formed connections throughout Indian Ocean regions, becoming central to the global economy of goods, art, and ideas. Yet historical entanglements transpired across differing scales and multiple modes of mobility, not just along global itineraries. This panel considers material histories that occurred on oceanic thresholds, uniting discussions of local, regional, trans-regional, and global travels that are usually confined to discrete conceptual spheres. Pallava stone sculptures, Sindhi architecture, Bengali muslin textiles, and Batavian wooden boxes with perfume bottles reveal the eclectic, hybrid, and multilayered forms that emerged in littoral spaces over the longue durée and challenge us to rethink the established temporal and regional boundaries that categorize art histories in South Asia and beyond.

#### India Abroad: Early Indian Images in Southeast Asia

Frederick Asher (*University of Minnesota*)

On May 18, 1964, an Indian newspaper reported the discovery of a life-size statue in Malaysia, one said to be a figure of Indian origin dating to the Pallava dynasty. The report stimulated a question in the Indian Parliament regarding proper ownership of the statue, but the question overlooked other sculptures in northern Malaysia and southern Thailand that almost surely are Pallava-period works, probably documenting, as much as any written text, the presence of Indian communities despite textual admonitions—e.g. in the *Manu Smirti*—against going to sea. This talk will look at sculptures from the Bujang Valley in Kedah and Takuapa District in southern Thailand, ones that have reasonable claim to Indian origins. They stimulate questions that the talk would address, e.g. what do they indicate about an Indian presence in the Straits of Malacca and Andaman Sea; were these sculptures or others the source of stimulus for local production of Buddhist and Hindu imagery; how do images such as these, if they were produced by Indian artists, reinforce the idea of Indianized kingdoms as George Coedès conceived it or Greater India, as H.G. Quaritch Wales and others imagined it?

#### The Rootedness of Woven Air: Travels and Travails of Cotton Muslin in Mughal Bengal

Sylvia Houghteling (*Bryn Mawr College*)

Since Roman times, the diaphanous cotton muslin cloth (*malmal*) of Bengal has travelled via the Indian Ocean to Europe, Egypt, and China; consumers from ancient Rome to Persia referred to *malmal* cloth as “woven air.” Histories of maritime trade highlight the textile medium as exhibiting the ideal conditions for portability: textiles are slender, nearly weightless, and can be folded into tight spaces. By the end of the sixteenth century, however, Bengal began to pay much of its annual tribute to the Mughal treasury in the form of cotton cloth, meaning that the majority of fine *malmal* cloth did not travel abroad on ships, but traversed shorter, overland routes to reach the vast imperial households in Delhi and Agra. This paper argues that *malmal* cloth represents a limit case in the history of Indian Ocean exchange. Despite its eminent transportability, the geographic reach of *malmal* cloth contracted in the early modern period due to the unique ecological conditions of its production and its high domestic value. “Woven air” may have moved lightly across the seas, but in this moment, it had been trapped for appreciation at home.



## **Maru-Gurjara and Beyond: The Intertwined Material Histories of Sindh, Rajasthan and Gujarat**

Fatima Quraishi (*New York University*)

At the threshold of the Indian subcontinent, Sindh and its coastal ports have historically played an important role in Indian Ocean maritime networks. The region witnessed the movement of countless military incursions by those intent upon conquering the riches of al-Hind. Most certainly, these long-distance mobilities had a transformative effect on local artistic practices, linking them to regions far and wide. Casting Sindh as an expansive cosmopolitan space on the periphery of empires, however, has obscured the enduring regional artistic links it has with the neighboring provinces of Gujarat and Rajasthan. The architecture of Sindh, such as the medieval monuments of the Tharparkar district, the Makli necropolis (ca. 1380–1660) near Thatta, and the Thambo Wari mosque (ca. 12th century) in the Indus delta, reflects these interregional connections. These sites reveal a shared vocabulary of forms that transcend the differing political, ethnic, and religious affiliations of Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Sindh, and emphasize the persistence of regional linkages in a space of global mobility. This paper examines Sindhi architecture and—through questions of liminality, encounter, and circulation—reflects upon the difficulty of situating multi-layered spaces within established disciplinary and temporal boundaries.

## **Maritime Containers for Aromatic Gifts: The Material Conditions of Travel and Exchange in the late 17th and early 18th C Indian Ocean**

Nancy Um (*Binghamton University*)

Boxed sets of bottles filled with perfumed oils were destined as fine gifts for notable recipients across the Indian Ocean arena in the late 17th C and early 18th C, such as the King of Siam, the Sultan of Banten, the Qing emperor, the Qasimi Imam of Yemen, and the Negus of Ethiopia. Commissioned primarily by the merchants of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), these sets were comprised of porcelain bottles from the kilns of Arita (Japan) or glass vials that were mold blown, painted, and gilded in Gujarat, along with their metal caps, nested in segmented velvet-lined boxes that were made of fragrant sandalwood or tropical hardwood, often in Batavia. Rather than dismissing these items as wholly western in character or dividing them by medium, they can be aggregated effectively as a group and paired with VOC records in order to understand the conditions of concentricity and containing as key facets of the enhanced design of goods that were intended to impress their (mostly inland) recipients around an uncommonly wide sphere of dissemination. But, these features were also engineered so that they could withstand the bumpy overseas journey over the open seas around an interconnected maritime world.

## Panel#5

### **Boston and Beyond: Contexts and Legacies of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's Scholarship**

Chairs: Brinda Kumar (*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*) and Janice Leoshko (*University of Texas, Austin*)

Generations of scholars have grappled with the scholarship of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947), often critiquing, bringing nuance to, or expanding his approach. It was while working at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston for thirty years that his seminal publications would arguably delineate canons, establish methodological approaches, and even gain a popular cultural impact. His relationships with scholars, collectors, and museums critically shaped the discipline of art history. While some aspects of the networks in which he operated are well known, others that significantly impacted him are not. This panel considers the circumstances in which Coomaraswamy's scholarship emerged in the early 20th century as well as the legacies of his work.

#### **The Figure of the Artisan in Ananda Coomaraswamy's Mediaeval Sinhalese Art**

Iftikhar Dadi (*Cornell University*)

Coomaraswamy served as the first director of the Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon, residing there between 1902-1907. Coomaraswamy also became increasingly conscious of colonialism's destructive impact on traditional arts and crafts. Informed by his readings of historical Indian texts and his awareness of the British Arts and Crafts movement, he did extensive fieldwork on surviving traditional artifacts and practice. Coomaraswamy's magisterial text, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, self-published in a luxurious limited edition in 1908, is a most significant, original, and detailed study. It remains valuable today as an indispensable guide to traditional crafts of Kandy.

*Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* translates the legacy of William Morris and the British Arts and Crafts movement into the colonial context. This paper argues that the study is caught between a historical recreation of "mediaeval" Kandy, and an anthropological and ahistorical description of craft processes. Coomaraswamy's paradoxical account is the result of a necessary mistranslation of the "mediaeval" when carried over from industrializing Britain into the colonial site. The consequences of this maneuver are both textually and photographically incorporated into *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, in which the artisanal figure oscillates between a dying anthropological specimen on the one hand, and an already deceased and spectral figure on the other.

#### **"The Dance of Shiva" at 100 Years**

Laura Weinstein (*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*)

Ananda Coomaraswamy's essay "The Dance of Shiva" made a remarkable impact when it was introduced in America in 1918. The notion of Chola images of Shiva Nataraja as transcendent expressions of Hindu spirituality has reverberated throughout scholarship on Indian art ever since. This paper argues that to understand "The Dance of Shiva" and its impact in America, we must view it within the discourse of "oriental" and modern dance to which Coomaraswamy was a notable contributor. It explores associations between Nataraja and "oriental" dance that pre-date the essay; places "The Dance of Shiva" alongside Coomaraswamy's other publications on dance and gesture; and reconstructs a matrix of dancers and performances through which the essay's ideas were developed and amplified.

Art historical studies of Chola Nataraja images since Coomaraswamy's time have had to reckon with this complex inheritance while carving out new paths of inquiry. Meanwhile, the popular circulation of Nataraja that Coomaraswamy set in motion continues along a separate trajectory. Just after the 100th anniversary of "The Dance of Shiva," this paper looks back to the historical and intellectual setting of one of South Asian art history's iconic texts and asks what we can learn from it today.

## **Whose Legacy? Ethel Mairet and Stella Bloch as Collaborators in Collecting and Research**

Antonia Behan (*Bard Graduate Center*)

This paper addresses the topic of Coomaraswamy's legacy by questioning it as his alone. Coomaraswamy's wives were scholars in their own right, and collaborators in his work. This paper seeks to recover their now-forgotten legacies in the study of South Asian art, and understand their work within the framework of the creative partnership. Focusing on Coomaraswamy's collections at the Boston MFA, almost one third of which are textiles, this paper will examine the contributions of Ethel Partridge (later, Mairet) and Stella Bloch. Mairet's notebooks and photography formed the basis of Coomaraswamy's *Medieval Sinhalese Art*, and her scholarship on embroidery will shed light on some forgotten Sri Lankan pieces in the collection. The two also shared a deeper commitment to theories of craft and making, which Mairet continued in her own work as an influential textile historian and weaver. It was the theory of dance and drama, on which he worked with Stella Bloch, with whom he traveled to South East Asia 1920–21, collecting textiles for the museum while she studied dance at the Javanese court. Setting Coomaraswamy's work in historical context will motivate an examination of concepts of making and performance and their relationship to early twentieth century artistic movements.

## **Modern Postural Yoga in An Expanded Field**

Nachiket Chanchani (*University of Michigan, Ann Arbor*)

In 2005, Bostonians gathered at the Cutler Majestic Theatre to watch an octogenarian stand on his head. The performer, B. K. S. Iyengar (1918–2014) was neither an ordinary artist nor a newcomer to town. Reporting on Iyengar's previous visit to Harvard University in 1987, the BBC dubbed him, "Michelangelo of Yoga." In this paper, I consider Coomaraswamy's legacy by unraveling how his life and work informed the development of modern postural yoga and its struggle to be recognized as an art form. I argue that Coomaraswamy's recovery of the symbolic morphology of the plastic and performing arts of South Asia and his insistence that classical artists and yogis were indistinguishable in their values and aims, gave arsenal to modern yogacharyas seeking to overthrow entrenched perceptions of asanas as contortions at best and sorcery at worst. Shyam Sundar Goswamy (1891–1978) encouraged his students to develop asanas modeled on the canon laid down in *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*. Iyengar, a life-long student of Coomaraswamy's writings, deployed photography to record and reframe his sculptural performance of asanas and pranayama, positioned nataraja asana as the pinnacle of posture, and cultivated the persona of a Boston Brahmin concerned with the metaphysics of figuration and abstraction.

## Day 2 | Saturday, October 14

### Panel#6

#### Histories of the Sensorium in South Asian Art

Chairs: Anna Seastrand (*University of Chicago*)

Subhashini Kaligotla (*Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz*)

This panel highlights a methodological shift in the study of South Asian art from focus on the strictly visual to approaches that engage the multisensorial life of built spaces and the spatial and temporal experiences of those who travel through them. The papers in this panel tackle issues within the full range of sensory experience, including how we account for aesthetic pleasure and affective response, write a history of sense perception for the visual arts, and draw upon South Asian sources and aesthetic theories. The papers consider the soundscape of temple and museum; the role of touch in devotion; the tactile and olfactory experience of courtly objects; and the somatic experience of movement in architecture. Collectively, these papers integrate traditional art historical sources with sensorial, aesthetic, and phenomenological considerations that offer new methods for the study of South Asian art.

#### Amplifying the Museum

Risha Lee (*Rubin Museum*)

The museum space has been a site of sensory debate for some time now. Currently, institutional voices advocate for more dynamic, visitor-centered approaches to exhibition-making. Meanwhile, their critics often deride this focus and claim that it comes at the expense of intellectual rigor. But we would do well to consider the obvious: before entry into a collection, objects have lived in a multisensory world, occupying positions that are different from vitrine and label style installations.

In this presentation I will discuss some of my recent curatorial projects at the Rubin Museum of Art and the Minneapolis Institute of Art. In these projects I have attempted to move beyond an 'ocular-centric' museum experience, highlighting the visitors' multisensory engagement with the world and attempting to expand the discourse beyond conventional object-focused narratives to a wide variety of embodied encounters. I am interested in such questions as: how do we draw attention to the dynamic relationships that exist between people and objects? How do we highlight invisible philosophies that motivate forms, practices, and modes of conceptual engagement with art? These questions, I hope, result in installations that are as effective pedagogical tools as they are true to communicating the multidimensionality of the works of art on display.

## Decorative Arts as Sensorial Interlocutors in Nineteenth-Century Travancore, Kerala

Deepthi Murali (*University of Illinois, Chicago*)

Between 1830–60 the princely state of Travancore inhabited a complex political space—Travancore kings were caught in the duality of modernizing their state as per tenets set by the British while simultaneously striving for a continuity of traditional practices of kingship and governance. In this paper I argue that in order to balance these two diverse narratives, Travancore employed courtly objects as interlocutors in the colonial cultural politics of South India. Focusing on two royal objects produced in this period, this paper demonstrates that in Travancore it became possible, at once, to practice colonial modernity and resist it through the engendering of a quasi-sacral sensorium produced by and through these objects. In particular, it examines the production of sacral-secular spaces within Travancore's court and within the capital city of Thiruvananthapuram. Investigating tactile, olfactory, and visual experiences of courtly objects, this paper not only contends that Travancore practiced a cultural politics of exclusion (of the colonizer from select spatial-sensorial regimes) but also challenges the Dirksian understanding of princely states as "theater state." Instead, this paper demonstrates the political efficacy of such spectacles and reconsiders the agentic role of courtly objects in colonial India.

## The Sound of Praxis Uttered in Stone

Deborah Stein (*Independent Scholar*)

Erect, the personification of the first and last letters of the Sanskrit alphabet stands between two lions on tenth-century temples across Medapata and Uparamala. Her name is Ksemankari. Bent, the knee of Natesha moves in an iconographic display of dissolution. More than visual iconography, these two figures and their company in specific patterns across the landscape reveal the early medieval history of sound and movement. Stone encapsulates somatic experience. From the architecture of our human mouth, to the places we grab inside door frame, or split our legs to cross a threshold, stone architecture reveals the kinesthetic of medieval praxis. Butter and vermilion lost, stone representation of sacrificial ladles remains.

Specific deities reveal the importance of mantric speech, traces of affect in petrified displays of animal sacrifice, and the transitory residue of dance. What is the future relationship between formalism and social history in the study of affect? In the context of South Asia, must phenomenology be anthropological and does that inherently make our discussions around art illustration-oriented, historical, and/or narrative? Is there a new postcolonial method for formalism beyond colonial taxonomy and positivism—where the object serves as a catalyst for all that radiates from it visually, experientially, and sensorially?

# IN MEMORIAM

## Dina Bangdel

(December 5, 1964 – July 2, 2017)



An internationally recognized scholar of Himalayan and Indian art history, Dina Bangdel passed away at the age of 52 from a rare form of cancer. As the daughter of Lain Singh Bangdel, Nepal's first modern artist, Dina was exposed to Nepal's rich artistic tradition as she accompanied her father to the temples and monasteries of the Kathmandu Valley from an early age. Pursuing the formal study of South Asian art, Dina earned degrees from Bryn Mawr College, the University of Wisconsin, and The Ohio State University. Dina published and lectured widely on South Asian and Himalayan art. Her work seamlessly integrated Nepal's ancient Buddhist and Hindu traditions with the vibrant contemporary art movements her father's pioneering work had inspired. Dina was Associate Professor and Director of the Art History Department at Virginia Commonwealth University, Qatar. Her deep knowledge of Nepal and its culture are irreplaceable, but she planted seeds across the globe that her colleagues, students, and friends will now nurture. Beloved by all who knew her, Dina will truly be missed by the ACSAA community.

—Susan L. Huntington

## Panel#7

### Kindred Spirits: Adivasi/Tribal Culture and Modernist Art in South Asia

Chair: Sonal Khullar (*University of Washington*)

While exhibitions such as *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (1984) and *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989) have received much critical and scholarly attention for the connections they drew between dominant and marginal cultural practices, their antecedents, cognates, and legacies in South Asia have been little explored. Recent studies by Partha Mitter and Prathama Banerjee have highlighted the problem and promise of the primitive in modern India, showing how notions of adivasi (indigenous) and tribal culture were crucial to the formation of modern art and society. This panel addresses the intimate and fraught relationship between adivasi/tribal culture and modernist art in South Asia during the twentieth century. This relationship has taken on a new urgency in light of contemporary debates on place, environment, indigeneity, and globalization, and the rise of socially engaged art practice in which artists assume the role of activists and ethnographers.

#### **Bodies and Machines: Adivasi Modernist Entanglements on India's Industrial Frontier**

Mircea Raianu (*University of Maryland*)

The spectacular contrast between the primitive and the modern engendered by large-scale industrialization fascinated artists, photographers, and writers in mid-twentieth century India. This paper examines various depictions of adivasi bodies at work in the Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) plant, highlighting the interplay between modernism and private corporate patronage. It focuses on the paintings of Walter Langhammer, mentor of the Progressive Artists' Group in Bombay, commissioned by TISCO in the 1940s; the photographs of Sunil Janah and the writings of anthropologist Verrier Elwin, both reproduced in the company's promotional materials in the 1950s; and a series of glass panels painted for TISCO by M.F. Husain in 1984. These works foreground the human body and its resilience through labor, recasting interwar discourses of rationalization and technical skill in a new, postcolonial developmental frame. The nation's most ostensibly 'backward' and 'primitive' people would become productive laboring subjects and citizens, while at the same time imbuing cold machinery with their vitality and virility. Yet if the Progressives' paintings, Janah's photographs, and Elwin's ethnographies could be uneasily folded into a statist nationalist imaginary, they also testified to the autonomous capacity of swadeshi capital to transform subjectivities and embed itself in the nation.

#### **Selves and Others: Re-Castings of Primitivism in Post/colonial Indian Art**

Sanjukta Sunderason (*Leiden University*)

Retreating into the tribal 'heartland' of the Santhal Parganas was integral to artistic search for a self and timelessness in late-colonial India. While celebrations of the tribal everyday at Santiniketan are widely seen as the core of this search, the pattern itself was sharp even amidst urban artists and intellectuals. Members of the Calcutta Group, for instance, visited Dumka in the 1930s and 1940s with the Marxist poet Bishnu Dey, as guests of civil servant and art historian, William Archer, and had close dialogues with the anthropologist Verrier Elwin. These journeys, while being parts of a wider middle-class intellectual celebration of a 'pure,' 'non-urban' 'other', also became parts of a distinctly left-wing rhetoric of 'national-popular' art that sought to root revolutionary art within the quotidian lives of 'the people.' During the conjunctural decades of late-colonial and early postcolonial India, primitivism in art was far from being a monolithic category; it was, as I will argue in this paper, a multi-layered and ambiguous resource that found complex ideological and aesthetic uses across -nationalist, Gandhian populist, left-wing or nation-statist rationalities, whereby new modernist alloys of selves and remoteness, participation and abstraction were being cast.

## **Jaidev Baghel and Meera Mukherjee: Craft, Art, and its Entanglements in Modern India**

Katherine Hacker (*University of British Columbia*)

In "Women as Artists in Contemporary India," Tapati Guha-Thakurta states that Calcutta-based sculptor Meera Mukherjee joins "the long line of exchange [my emphasis] between the modern and the folk in Indian art that goes back to figures like Nandalal Bose and Jamini Roy" (1999). Exchange, and Guha-Thakurta's unqualified use of the term, masks the unequal power relations between the 'modern and the folk.' While an urban artist such as Mukherjee could and did move between artistic genres, Bastar casters such as Jaidev Baghel were and are most often inscribed within the parameters of craft and folk or tribal art, terms that are by no means neutral. In 1953, Mukherjee traveled to Germany for study in sculpture and metal casting; her return to India in search of "living folk traditions" has been heralded as the turning point of her career. She traveled to Bastar in 1961 and studied the indigenous technique of wax-thread casting with Jaidev Baghel's father Sirman. Focusing on Meera Mukherjee and Jaidev Baghel, this paper will critically interrogate the intimate and fraught relationship between adivasi culture and modernist art in India, and will be situated in the complex cultural politics of Bastar today.

## **Crafting Forms of Being and Belonging in Nagaland: Modernist Art and Indigenous Material Culture in India**

Akshaya Tankha (*University of Toronto*)

Postcolonial art historical scholarship has highlighted the role that the notion of "tribal culture" played in the development of nationalist art in colonial India, critiqued its legacies in post-independence cultural institutions, and facilitated formal and ethnographic recognition of the heterogeneity of the work of indigenous artists and crafts persons. However, it has yet to track of the heterogeneity of the work of indigenous artists and crafts persons. However, it has yet to track the artistic legacies of tribal culture in indigenously inhabited regions. This paper analyzes the creative ways that indigenous artists such as Lepden Jamir and Veswuzo Phesao adapt the discourse and practices of tribal culture towards processes of being and belonging in the northeast Indian state of Nagaland, where a movement for political autonomy first expressed in terms of difference from the nationalist body-politic in the late colonial period came to a provisional end in 1997. It reflects on the ways that historical archives and institutional paradigms focused on highlighting "tribal" distinction are reinterpreted in aesthetic practice in a political context characterized by varied investments in the question of difference, thereby addressing new questions and concerns these practices raise for modernist art in South Asia.

## **Panel#8**

### **Museums in Contention**

Chair: Richard H. Davis (*Bard College*)

More than spaces for the exhibition of visual culture, museums function as grounds upon which claims about culture can be made, countered, and defended. These papers explore the museum as the site of contentious discourse in which notions of authenticity, identity, and history itself are defined and redefined.

#### **Unraveling a National Symbol: Partition and the Lahore Museum**

Aparna Kumar (*UCLA*)

This paper endeavors to raise questions around the physical and ideological impact of partition (the division of British India in August 1947) on the development of museological institutions in India and Pakistan, in an effort to unsettle prevailing historiography that inscribes the museum as national in South Asia. My primary point of departure is the history of the Lahore Museum, an institution that was gravely affected by partition when its collections were dramatically split between India and Pakistan in 1948. Central to my analysis of the Lahore Museum are not only the physical ramifications of this process of division upon its collections, which saw priceless artworks disassembled and destroyed in the name of 'equity.' This paper also investigates the ideological relationship that develops between the Lahore Museum and its counterpart across the border in Chandigarh, where 40% of the Lahore collections eventually found refuge in the 1960s. This cross-border connection, I argue, presents an important opportunity to rethink the history of museums in South Asia in terms of exile, displacement, and dispossession—discourses that have significantly reshaped partition historiography in recent years and further point to the disjointed relationship between the museum and the nation-state in South Asia.

#### **Display-potential and Museumization at the Mughal Red Fort, Delhi**

Aditi Chandra (*UC Merced*)

Scholarship on museums and monuments examines these sites as instruments of knowledge production, but tends to examine them as distinct entities. Museums within monuments have either not been analyzed or have been examined separately from the historic site. This paper focuses on the colonial and postcolonial interventions of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) at the 17th-century Mughal Red Fort and examines what I call its display-potential. I suggest that this historic structure became a museum-like monument for assembled publics. I refer to two modes of "museumization:" first, the setting up of on-site museums by the ASI; and second, the use of the Red Fort by the British for imperial, performative displays (Durbars) in order to situate themselves as the legitimate successors of the Mughal dynasty. Most scholarship argues that monuments are sites of knowledge production. I ask the reverse, which is to not simply say that a monument produces knowledge about a nation, but that certain modes of knowledge also produce the monument. The study of museumizing practices at the Mughal Red Fort also reveals how an "acceptable" Islam is shaped for the nation at an Islamic monument that is now an icon for independent India.



## Curating the Lives of a Wish-fulfilling Buddha

Heidi Tan (SOAS)

The 'Alodawpyi Buddha', or 'Wish-fulfilling Buddha' is known through its association with the temple of the same name in Bagan. Dated to the late 11th century, the unprovenanced image of the teaching Buddha remains on display at the Bagan Archaeology Museum, whilst its plaster replica started a new life along with many others, when they were installed in newly restored temple abodes in the early 1990s. Although replication is not new to the Buddhist tradition, the ways in which it has been employed as a curatorial strategy in Myanmar has been little studied. Who facilitates the replication and why? What happens to the original, when replicas and reproductions in various media start to proliferate and take on their own lives at pagoda museums, on family shrines and in buses, ever-present and often highly mobile? New digital and online Imagery and its appropriation for international exhibition-making have also enriched the biographies of these images. This work-in-progress is part of a doctoral thesis on local curating in the context of what are known as pagoda museums—studied here as an expanding field of cultural practice in the wake of the 2015 elections in Myanmar.

## Everyone Needs a Voice

Robert L. Brown (UCLA)

I am in the process of planning an exhibition of Sri Lankan art scheduled to open at Los Angeles County Museum of Art in November 2018. My paper focuses on some of the unexpected issues that arose in its four years of preparation, including the exhibition's politicization, the difficulties of borrowing from Sri Lankan museums, the lack of art to present all ethnic and religious groups, and concerns of a continued Orientalized discourse. A politics of expectations have molded the show in various ways. My paper explores how this has put us into the situation of satisfying various national constituencies and museum curators, and asks the wider question: is our expectation of a continuous artistic narrative necessary to the identification of a national group?

# IN MEMORIAM

## Julie Romain

(May 4, 1973 -  
April 17, 2017)



Julie Romain was an accomplished scholar, earning her Ph.D. at UCLA in the area of Indian and Southeast Asian art history in 2015. At the time of her passing, Julie was an Assistant Curator at LACMA and an adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Art History at Occidental College. At LACMA, Julie was instrumental in organizing numerous exhibitions and public programs highlighting their South and Southeast Asian art collection, which include: *Heroes and Villains: The Battle for Good in India's Comics* (2009–10), *The Way of the Elders: The Buddha in Modern Theravada Traditions* (2011–12), *Temptation of Arjuna: A Tale of Spiritual Triumph* (2011–13), *Unveiling Femininity in Indian Painting and Photography* (2012–13), *Alia Syed: Eating Grass* (2012–13), and *Storytelling in Bali: Paintings from the Bateson-Mead Collection* (2017). Her final exhibition *The Jeweled Isle: Art from Sri Lanka*, co-curated with Robert Brown, will open at LACMA in September 2018.

Julie was a thoughtful, dedicated colleague and friend who brought joy to everyone. She is greatly missed. Julie is survived by her mother, Martha Stevens, her brother, Brian Rosenberg, her husband, Tony, and their son, Seth.

--Melody Rodari

# Day 3 | Sunday, October 15

## Panel#9

### Lahore, Reclaiming Its Mughal Past

Chair: James Wescoat (*MIT*)

Lahore, the provincial capital of the Mughal empire, referred to as the dar-us sultanat, has so far received less scholarly attention compared to Agra and Delhi. The papers of this panel discuss three important features of Lahore. The first paper discusses the urban design character of Lahore formed by Sufi abodes and development of new garden precincts. The city also hosted Christian missionaries and instigated a hybrid Mughal-Christian art and architecture. The second paper maps the arrival of Jesuit missionaries to Lahore on Akbar's invitation and the building of the first church of the Mughal Empire. Lahore fort is an important monument where Christian themes were employed in Kala Burj during Jahangir's period. The last paper probes the relationship between the imperial thought and the public gaze that was meant to engage with these pictorial narratives. The images are analyzed from social, cultural, and aesthetic perspectives to understand the communicative power of these signs and symbols.

#### **Urban Landscape of an Imperial Mughal city: The case of Lahore**

Abdul Rehman (*Independent scholar*)

The urban design character of Mughal Lahore begins with the coming of architecture and urban garden traditions of Central Asia. Emperor Akbar built a double defensive wall around the city, pierced with twelve gates and stayed in the fort for four years. The city rose to prosperity under Akbar compared with any previous time. As a hub of socio-cultural and intellectual activities during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Lahore's population was a rich mix of different classes. The spiritual environment created by the Ghazanavid saints was also maintained by the Mughal emperors. Shrines belonging to different faiths spread throughout the town became rich source of inspiration and stimulation—as "pools of Imagination" for the aesthetic appreciation of nature in different scales and various mediums. The urban form of Lahore emerged through the existence of strong Sufi-settlement relationship as well as various types of garden tradition leading to a concept of paradise on earth. This paper will present the urban landscape character of Lahore formed by Sufi shrines and various form of garden tradition with the help of primary sources as well as early British period maps which have not been explored previously from urban design point of view.

#### **Lahore Fort's Picture Wall: Jahangir and Shah Jahan's Decrees Read by Lahori Eyes**

Nadhra S. N. Khan, (*Lahore University of Management Sciences, Lahore, Pakistan*)

The Picture Wall of Lahore Fort that stretches from the northern side completed by Jahangir, to the western side carried out during Shah Jahan's reign is an important contribution of Mughal art in architecture. Decorated with kashi-kari or faience mosaic on its exterior surface featuring animate imagery, this wall is the only Mughal structure that operates as a communication device used by the emperors for the inhabitants of a city, a fact that has never been adequately investigated. Each image appears to have been carefully chosen to convey a particular message or communicate an imperial concept of the self and the world that Jahangir (lit. world-seizer) and Shah Jahan (lit. king of the world) ruled. Since contemporary Mughal chronicles do not mention the Picture Wall, the images have to be interpreted in relation to each emperor's Weltanschauung with the help of information gleaned from relevant textual and visual sources. This paper will probe into the relationship between the imperial thought and the public gaze that was meant to engage with these pictorial narratives. Above all, it will investigate the reasons behind the unique choice of the Lahore Fort's boundary wall to carry a pictorial narrative.

## **Moments of Transition: Recasting Lahore's Mughal Past**

Saleema Waraich (*Skidmore College*)

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Lahore enjoyed an esteemed position as one of the capital centers of the Mughal empire. In the eighteenth century, however, Lahore lost its elite position, though its stature was partially revived in the early nineteenth century when it became the seat of a powerful Sikh kingdom under Ranjit Singh. By the mid-nineteenth century, the British assumed control of the city as part of broader colonial project. My paper considers the ways in which the space of the Lahore Fort and its immediate environs was recast – physically and figuratively – in relationship to constructions of its Sikh, British, Mughal identities in the mid-to-late 19th and early 20th centuries. Particular attention is given to shifts involving popular conceptions of Sikh and Mughal identity in relationship to the Lahore Fort and Lahore's most oft-represented landscape: the Mughal and Sikh monuments along the northern side of the historic walled city. I examine such representations alongside a variety of sources, including a petition filed by residents of Lahore to the British government for the restoration of Mughal architectural sites, conservation efforts, 19th century histories of Lahore, and tour guide books. British efforts to restore Lahore's Mughal sites in the late 19th/early 20th century are juxtaposed with earlier efforts of locals to lay claim to the sites in order to examine a variety of engagements with the city's rich Mughal past.

## Panel#10

### Making Visible: Interplays of Medium and Authorship

Chair: Deepali Dewan (*Royal Ontario Museum*)

The papers propose "medium" as the material way for bringing into existence something that is invisible. Examples from the early-modern and the modern period demonstrate the work of a variety of mediums in giving imaginary desires and ideas a concrete visual presence and cultural authority. Niharika Dinkar examines the ghostly evocation of Elephanta caves in British colonial print culture. Jack Hawley finds painted portraits of the blind 16th century poet, Surdas, in a shadowy space beyond the poet's visionary words, while Kaitlin Emmanuel shows Lionel Wendt's photography as a means for inhabiting a world between conflicting discourses of colonial Sri Lanka. Hawon Ku explores intersections between world heritage sites and nationally established history textbooks in India from 1980 onwards.

#### Seeing the Singer: A Dispersed Set of Portraits of Surdas from Udaipur

John Stratton Hawley (*Columbia University*)

It is quite rare for a Hindi poet to be depicted in manuscript illustrations of the works he or she is believed to have composed, yet this does happen in the case of Surdas. Was it perhaps Sur's blindness—his "invisibility" with respect to the objects of his vision—that made it possible for manuscript illustrators to include him in the Krishna-līlā scenes they painted without fearing they might compromise the integrity of Krishna's charmed Braj world? I will raise this question in connection with a fifty-page set of Mewar Sursagar illustrations—now dispersed—that may have originated at the court of Amar Singh II. Almost entirely focused on bal-lila poems, this manuscript may be the earliest expression of the view that Surdas is above all a poet of Krishna's childhood. Notably, too, he is almost always shown singing. Obviously, the issue of the relation between text and image arises in important ways, and there are a few conundrums along the way.

#### The Phantasmagoria of Elephanta: Optical technologies and Haunted Stories

Niharika Dinka (*Boise State University*)

Thomas Rowlandson's prints of Elephanta published in *The Grand Master, or Adventures of Qui Hi in Hindostan* (1816), illustrated satirical poetry that related the adventures of Qui Hi, a soldier with the East India Company. While the later narrative lampoons the griffin and his ill-begotten wealth to attack the much-reviled figure of the 'nabob,' this paper examines representations of Elephanta in three prints that depict a range of optical devices. Elephanta inspired the production of an enormous literary and visual archive that sought to unravel its mysteries. Rowlandson's satirical prints enlist optical devices like the magic lantern and the kaleidoscope to underline the phantasmagorical character of the caves so that rather than the camera obscura which upheld the claims of rational vision, these devices are presented as consonant with practices of the occult associated with Hinduism, promising a clairvoyant 'view of futurity.' Recalling the double sense of the word 'medium' in the nineteenth century to observe the alliance between the occult and media technologies noted in contemporary media studies, I argue that optical technologies that broke common boundaries of time, space, and the body served as the most effective mediums to convey the haunted stories of Elephanta's ghostly interiors.

## **Lionel Wendt: Between Empire and Nation**

Kaitlin Emmanuel (*Cornell University*)

Lionel Wendt (1900–1944) had a brief but prolific career as a photographer in the 1930s in the island then known as Ceylon, today known as Sri Lanka. His practice corresponds to a time in which the idea of what it meant to be from, and of, the nation of Ceylon was called into question as the island moved closer to independence from British rule. I situate my approach to Wendt's photographs through this new imagining. I look at Wendt's role as leader of a forming avant-garde in Ceylon, the ways in which Wendt's photographs circulated, and the categorization of his "Surrealist" aesthetic. Rather than understand Wendt through a recognizable aesthetic and style, I seek to unpack the social aesthetics of his work. That is, how do Wendt's photographs speak to the social, political, and cultural conditions in which they were produced. In looking to the social history surrounding Wendt's practice, I aim to demonstrate how his photographs resist a singular meaning and can thus be subjected to multiple readings. These readings coexist and conflict with one another, which is itself an expression of their modernity and the conditions of their production.

## **World Heritage as Educational Material: Ajanta, Ellora, and the Taj Mahal in NCERT Textbooks**

Hawon Ku (*Seoul National University*)

In her personal memoir, Romila Thapar discusses how the Ministry of Education established a National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) following UNESCO's review of Indian textbooks of 1961, and how one of NCERT's main functions became the commissioning of writing textbooks for schools. As a result, the first NCERT history textbook ('Set 1') was published in 1966. While much critical reaction on the historiography, contents, and narratives can be found, they were continuously used with revisions until 1999, when the Bharatiya Janata Party claimed leadership of the newly formed government. A new set of textbooks ('Set 2'), reflecting a strong Hindutva vision, was commissioned and used until 2007, when a completely new set ('Set 3') replaced the earlier ones.

In this paper, I examine the description and context of art historical sites in these three sets of textbooks: Ajanta caves, Ellora Caves, and the Taj Mahal, three of the first UNESCO World Heritage sites inscribed from India in 1983. By comparing discussion of three sites with distinctive religious perceptions, I argue that an anxiety has been bred through the distance between status of "World Heritage Site" and "construction of a nation," reflected in each revised/new 'Set' of textbooks.