Jnanapravaha

JNANAPRAVAHA MUMBAI QUARTERLY

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2020

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Director's Note

All our lives have been upturned in an unprecedented way as the pandemic continues to rage in our city and state. Mumbai and Maharashtra have the dubious honour of being the frontrunners in cases and casualties since March, when it all began – and there seems no end in sight. Like everywhere else, the digital platform has proven to be our succour, allowing us to continue our teaching and programming, reaching out to students and the public, both known and new. The digital boundaryless world has expanded vistas – unaddressed subjects now being addressed by global scholars to an audience spanning all continents. At the same time, enabling students far and wide to enrol in our flagship courses, both Indian Aesthetics and Aesthetics, Criticism and Theory, resulted in registrations closing early. Much to be grateful for….

The Indian Aesthetics year-long course kicked off in July. The physical camaraderie and bonhomie was sorely missed as was the trademark *chai*. However, the inherent adaptability of the human species kicked in, and now, two and a half months into the Saturday lectures, all, students and scholars, are digital adepts, navigating an unknown terrain with dextrous ease. Our USP – a warm classroom which lends itself to animated discussion, is maintained by limiting numbers and facilitating meaningful interaction with teachers.

Under the Criticism and Theory rubric, an ongoing series of seminars is unravelling Foucault's fascinating philosophical insights of Western Art. The aesthetic concepts underlying well-known works by Velasquez, Magritte, Klee and Kandinsky, to name a few, are examined through close readings of his texts. Close on the heels of this series, another will examine the foundational concepts of photographic theory and its relationship to discourse, literature and art. The Buddhist Aesthetics track will also be addressed through the customary series of annual lectures titled 'Spinning the Wheel of the *Dharma*: Buddhist Art on the Indian Subcontinent'.

A less-visited area of the Maghrib was the topic of four scintillating lectures. Profusely illustrated, this region of North Africa, covering present day Tunisia to Morocco, is home to architectural marvels dating back as early as 8th to 10th centuries. These were contextualised in their historico-political, cultural and religious paradigms to show their affinity and independence from mainstream Islamic tropes.

This *Quarterly* also carries a student essay as testimony to our commitment to pedagogy, as well as a photo gallery which captures our past year in pictures. We hope you enjoy reading and viewing as much as we have, putting it together.

With my warmest wishes,

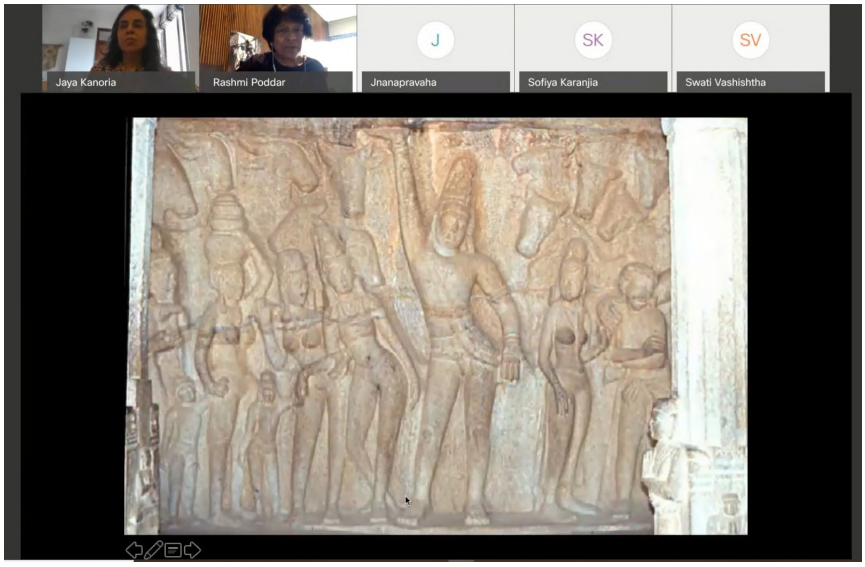
Rashmi Poddar PhD.
Director

AESTHETICS

A folio from the manuscript of Kalpasutra and Kalakacarya Katha: Jaina Tirthankara Enshrined (upper panel), Celestial Dancers (lower panel). c.1475

JPM's Aesthetics offerings include:
(1) an academic year-long Postgraduate Diploma/Certificate course in Indian Aesthetics, as well as ongoing public seminars and lectures in the field; (2) a quarterly Postgraduate Certificate course in Yoga and Tantra, as well as ongoing public seminars and lectures in the field; (3) a quarterly Postgraduate Certificate course in Southeast Asian Art and Architecture, as well as ongoing public seminars and lectures in the field; (4) a fortnight of public seminars and lectures in Islamic Aesthetics; (5) an ongoing series of public seminars in Buddhist Aesthetics; (6) an ongoing series of public seminars in South Asian Painting; and (7) occasional academic conferences and workshops in these fields.

Indian Aesthetics



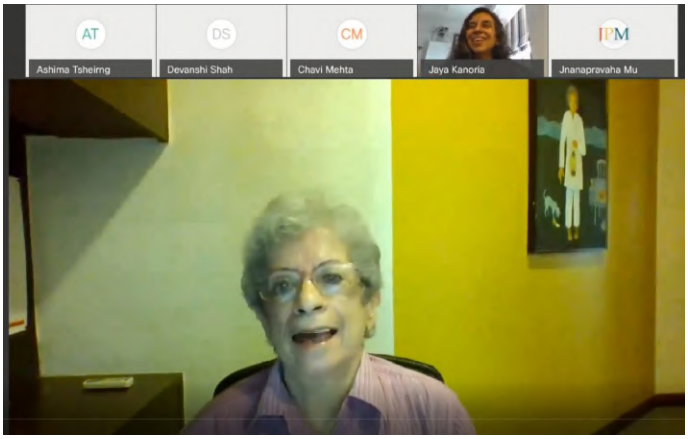
Dr. Rashmi Poddar speaks during 'Form - Rhythm, Harmony, Iconometry, Materiality, Line, Colour, Proportion'

Like many courses across the world, the Indian Aesthetics (IA) course has been launched online this year. Though forced by circumstance, this shift has resulted in unforeseen benefits. Our final enrolment of 62 students, including overseas participants, comprises a rich cohort of accomplished individuals from many fields. The IA class size has been deliberately restricted to ensure a collegial atmosphere and personal interaction between scholars and students. The number of IA Diploma students who will go through the rigorous academic writing component of the course has been curtailed to 30 to enable ample feedback and individual attention. The Jnanapravaha

team works consistently and with concerted energy towards ensuring that online sessions are as smooth as possible. This year, our institution has chosen the superior Cisco Webex platform to try and overcome the challenges of the technological relay of all its programmes.

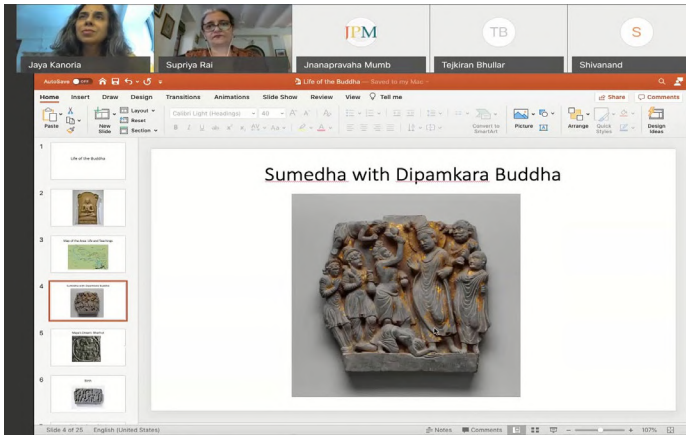
As always, IA continues to evolve, even though the course is still stretched on a roughly chronological framework aligned with *Rasa* theory. It still rests on multiple disciplines such as history, archaeology, architecture, anthropology, literature, philosophy, and religion, giving students a wide view of the development of aesthetics in the Indian subcontinent across 5,000 years. Some new inclusions in the IA course are two evenings on iconography and a session on colonial photography. The pre-Mughal painting component has been expanded as well, and will be conducted over two sessions for this iteration.

The course began in mid-July 2020 with foundational lectures that are unique to the institution. They include an introduction to classical Indian aesthetics as well as to form, content and meaning in relation to Indian art, especially in the visual context. These sessions by Dr. Rashmi Poddar, Jnanapravaha's director, literally open a new world to our students. Dr. Poddar also conducts a session on *Rasa*, a concept which arose in relation to dramaturgy but which immeasurably enhances the understanding of the subcontinent's visual art. Extensively illustrated, Dr. Poddar's sessions also introduce students to well-known masterpieces of Indian art which are used to illustrate theoretical underpinnings drawn from the *Vedas*, *Puranas* and the many philosophical positions or *darshans* that proliferated in the subcontinent over its long pre-history, proto-history and history. Ancient and medieval thought is presented through the lens of 20th-century scholarship, making it relevant and current. Dr. Veena Londhe's exploration of Sanskrit poetics, which came immediately after Dr. Poddar's introduction to classical concepts, provided the necessary background of aesthetic trajectories in the subcontinent.



Dr. Shereen Ratnagar speaks during 'Political-Cultural Background of Indian Harappan Civilisation'

An examination of the proto-historic Indus Valley Civilisation was conducted through a session by the well-known Dr. Shereen Ratnagar, an archaeologist who has authored several books on the subject. Her approach is anthropological rather than antiquarian, and her session referred to familiar as well as obscure objects and architecture from this civilisation. However, until the Indus Valley script is deciphered, the enigma of the meaning and use of objects and built forms of the time remains a matter for careful interpretation.



Dr. Supriya Rai speaks during 'Buddha – Life, Events, and the 3 Bodies: Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, Nirmanakaya Dhamma – Early Buddhist Philosophy: The Noble Truths, Doctrine of Dependent Origination Sangha – Tripitakas'

Dr. Supriya Rai is a scholar-practitioner of Buddhism and hence was able to bring special depth to her exploration of the Buddha's life and teaching. She accomplished this through the telling of significant stories and images displaying the aesthetics of Gandharan images and their various *mudras* which reflect *Theravada* and *Mahayana* philosophy. Dr. Rai examined the *viharas* and *mahaviharas*, and the concept of *trikaya* or the three bodies. Dr. Leela Wood's thoughtfully illustrated session showed how the development in the aesthetics of early Buddha images and Buddhist *stupas* relates to the evolving philosophical tenets of Buddhism. Ms. Swati Chemburkar's session on Buddhist *tantra* focussed on Indo-Tibetan practices of *Vajrayana* Buddhism. In addition to its textual, ritual and architectural nuances, she discussed the more controversial realm of politics as visible in the *Vajrayana* of this region.

Over the last four years, synopses, bibliographies, glossaries and, most importantly, readings for each session have been posted on our student portal in advance. The portal is an archive which is extremely valuable and relevant to our institution, expanding the scope of Jnanapravaha's activities and providing additional depth. For those committed enough to read, this access to authentic material enables a rounded academic experience. In the immediate future, the course looks forward to sessions by Dr. Viraj Shah and Ms. Kamalika Bose on Jain philosophy, art and architecture. **– *J.K.***

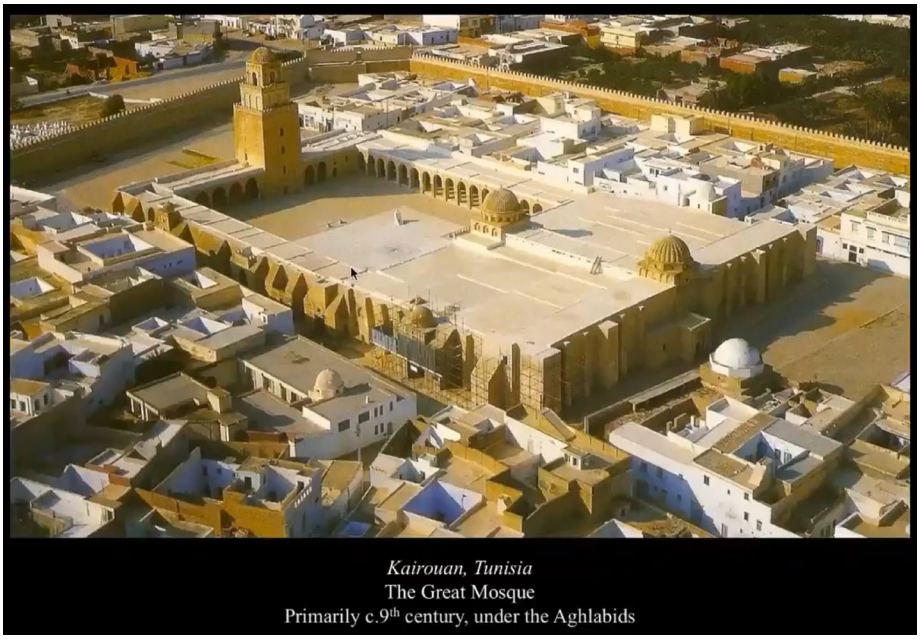
Islamic Aesthetics

PAST PROGRAMMES

Reflections on the Premodern Islamic Monuments in the Maghrib (Western North Africa)

September 8th & 9th, 2020 | Riyaz Latif (Associate Professor, FLAME University)

Professor Latif's seminar on premodern Islamic monuments of the Maghrib drew aside the thick curtain of time. The layperson is scarcely aware that some of the oldest surviving monuments of Islamdom, with foundations dating to the 7th century, are found in Ifriqiyah (present-day Tunisia), though they have undergone several later transformations. By 645 CE, the Arabs ruled present-day Egypt and made westward raids, encountering local Berbers who converted to Islam. Kairouan is an important early city located in this region and had Abbasid governors until the 9th century when the Aghlabids, vassals to the Abbasids, came to power, adopting all the emblems of sovereignty. Kairouan flourished under their reign.



The foundations of the great mosque of Kairouan were laid in 670 CE. However, the structure was razed and rebuilt by the Aghlabids in three major phases during the 9th century (though it underwent multiple subsequent renovations). Its exterior wall is supported by rectangular buttresses; the hypostyle prayer hall with horseshoe arches has a T-plan (involving nave and transverse, and echoed in the elevation, punctuated by two domes). It resembles the articulation of the mosque of Damascus, as well as Umayyad and Abbasid structures in Samara. The portico leading to the prayer hall has a ribbed dome (a hallmark of African Islamic architecture), and visual features which became prototypes for later monuments. The columns in the prayer hall were recycled from Byzantine and Roman sites. The curious placement of columns with capitals in a distinctive octagon echoes the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. The minaret has an older, plain, almost-square base rising in articulations to the dome. Its antecedent, the round, ornate minaret form, is commonly found in North Africa and Spain, has precedents in Syria, and is like the lighthouse of Alexandria.

For the first time in Islam, a significant articulation of the *mihrab* – which has 28 perforated marble panels of Aghlabid provenance and porphyry columns – is seen in this mosque. The arch is framed by tiles from Iraq, pointing to a connected Islamic world. Four shell-like squinches transition to the dome, and medallions are ornamented with arabesque geometric patterns, the motifs showing transference from Abbasid Samara. Remains of stucco work echo the mosques in Balkh, Afghanistan and Sedrata in Eastern Algeria. This distinctive visuality translates elements from various regions while retaining the regional characteristics of Aghlabid architecture. The furniture is from the 11th-century Zirid period. Many small Aghlabid oratories dot the Kairouan *medina*. The important mosque of Ibn Khairun, with three doors in its façade (one of the first of this type), is a simple oblong divided into nine bays by four columns. Above the doors is a band of calligraphy where writing becomes ornamentation.

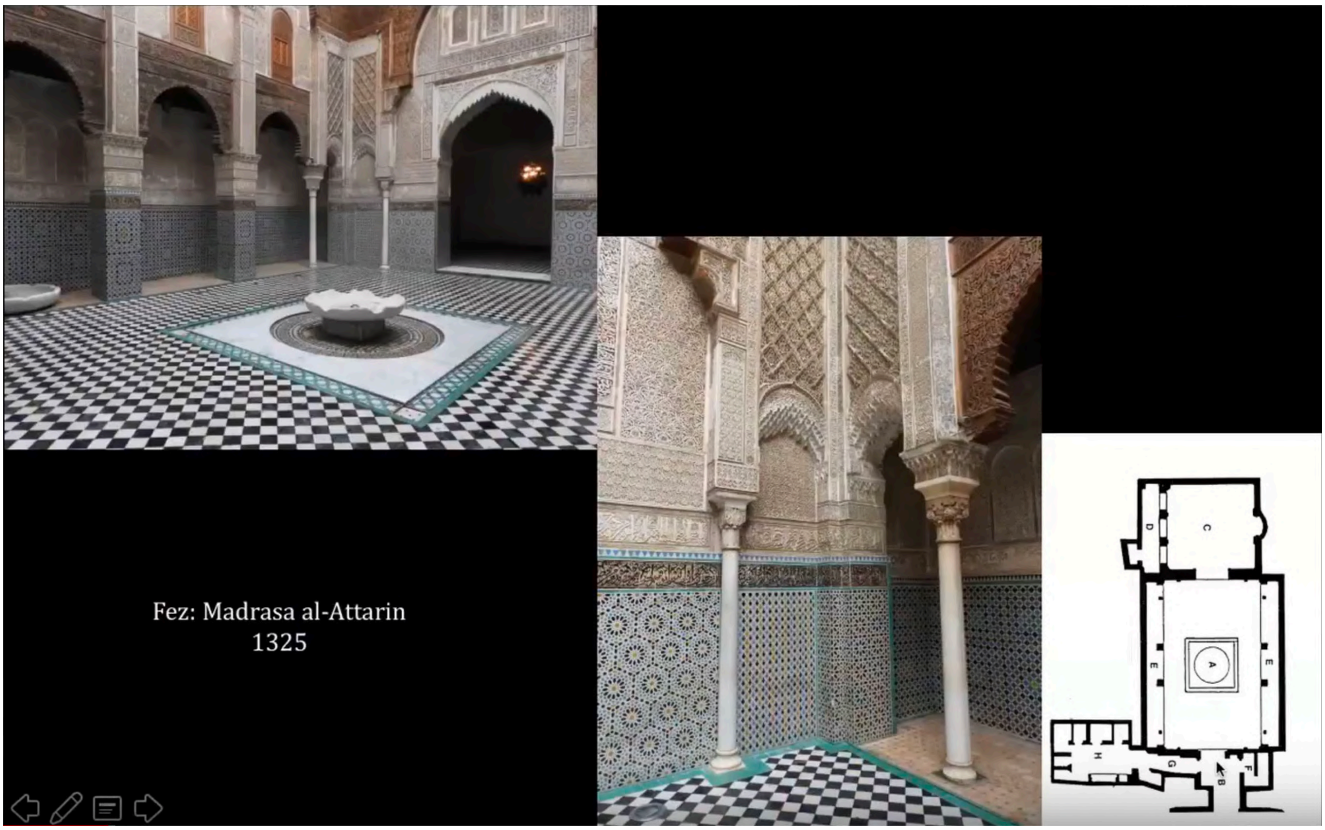
Two extant water collection and filtration basins (each with a small and large basin connected to an underground cistern), first constructed in Kairouan by the Aghlabids (and modified by later dynasties), are still in use. The inland city was safe from coastal incursions but was without a water source. Providing and controlling water was a significant feature of Islamic kingship, which conferred legitimacy. Roman aqueducts were also renovated to provide water to such basins.

Ribats or *rabats* are among the earliest extant Islamic monuments in Ifriqiyah. Found in many Islamic regions, they are primarily defence formations. Investment in them was necessitated by the Aghlabids' shifting relationships with the Byzantines, competing Islamic factions, and a powerful clergy at odds with political authority. *Ribats* grew into diverse hubs for the education and activities of *jihadis*, served as caravanserais, and were used by ascetic holy men. In addition to their defensive function, Dr. Latif hypothesised that the Aghlabids channelised restless energies through the locus of the *ribat*, often built just outside the city, and in proximity to each other along the Mediterranean coast, enabling the communication of military messages.

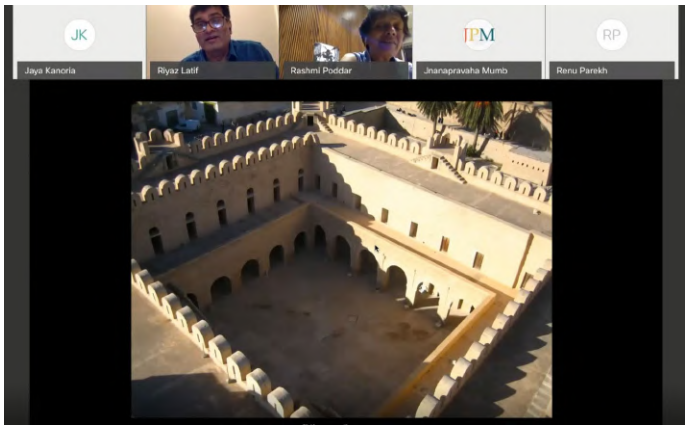
The *ribats* at Sousse and Monastir have foundations from the 8th century which predate the Aghlabids. The location of the fortress-like *ribat* at Sousse makes the entire *medina* an outpost for the martial, stark structure, with thick walls punctuated by circular ramparts, a large watchtower like a minaret, and a central courtyard surrounded by a series of small and large rooms. The lack of ornamentation echoes the ascetic persona of holy men who would also train cadres for military expeditions. A mosque with a hypostyle hall, *mihrab* and system of arches has been incorporated on the first floor near the articulated, fortress-like entrance. A terrace was added in the Aghlabid period. Scholars have posited a regional identity for *ribats*, connecting them to the Byzantine fortresses in this terrain. Many were appropriated by the Aghlabids and served as models for *ribats*, which also have affinities with Umayyad desert castles. At Monastir, the *ribat* has a labyrinthine spatial configuration which obscures the original Aghlabid design to which many functional additions took place over time. Clever articulation created architecture enabling the visual communication of messages.

Morocco lies at the western edge of the Maghrib. The earliest extant *madrasas* in this region, constructed by the Marinids, are architecturally distinctive. The nomadic Marinids settled in the northern mountains and provided soldiers to the ruling Almohads until they rose to take Taza, Fez (where the Marinids moved their capital), and Marrakesh, the Almohad capital, in 1269 CE. The old *medina* of Fez has *madrasas* inserted into its dense urban fabric. These institutions technically emerged in Northeast Iran as residential educational establishments, a function also served by mosques. Marinid *madrasas*, intimate in architectural scale and modelled primarily on the domestic architecture of Fez, unlike the monumental *madrasas* of other cities, were part of the Marinid bid for legitimacy, and are found quite close to larger *ulema*-controlled mosques.

Seen as uncouth usurpers by the elite *ulema* of Fez, the Marinids sponsored *madrasas* prolifically. The oldest of these is the Madrasa-al-Saffarin (1276) with a central pool in a courtyard surrounded by bare student cells. The Madrasa Dar-al-Makhzan (1320) was subsumed by the royal palace. The Madrasa-al-Sahrij, commissioned by powerful Sultan Abul Hassan, and twinning with the Madrasa-al-Sabain, lies next door to the Andalusian mosque where activity may have spilled over. The Madrasa-al-Attarin (1325) is a gem-like mosque where student cells overlook the



courtyard. Each of these buildings shows distinctive regional influence in the central pool or waterbody (which could also be a basin or fountain, sometimes imported from other Islamic regions).



Dr. Riyaz Latif speaks during 'Reflections on the Premodern Islamic Monuments in the Maghrib (Western North Africa)'

Most *madrasas* here have no façade, while ornamentation is restricted to the central courtyard. Three distinct registers of ornamentation are visible at the Madrasa Bou Inania (1350-1355) which was also a *jami* or Friday mosque. The lowest level has *Zelij* or ornate mosaic tile work. Above this are complex geometric patterns, topped by intricate stucco work with repeated vegetal motifs, lozenges, medallions and blind arches replete with *muqarnas*. The layer above this has intricately carved woodwork with calligraphy, and lies below an ornamented wooden ceiling and gabled wooden roof. At the top are verses from the Quran, while at eye-level we find formulaic verses, poetry and praises to the patron. The inscriptions convey the message of Abu Inan, who was in revolt against his father Abul Hasan. The purport of inscriptions reveals the intention with which the *madrasas* were built. Endowments linked them to villages and artisanal communities where knowledge was transmitted orally and embedded in the surfaces of the *madrasas*, forming a visual archive. The central space was state-sponsored and, in Foucauldian terms, is a panopticon. Each *madrasa* was meant to create loyal cadres who would administer far-flung areas. The stark asceticism of the student cells perhaps held the rich, almost paradisiacal promise seen in the richly decorated central space; context reveals the suggested meaning of these spaces where politics and religion come together.

Intriguingly, the Marinid necropolis lies within the ancient Chella complex, in the Almohad capital of Rabat, which was probably a Phoenician trading post, and certainly a Roman outpost. It was occupied intermittently by other groups, and has the remains of a *madrasa* with an oratory or mosque commissioned by Abu Inan. The Chella was a convenient site to make forays into Andalusia, chronicled as expeditions in the name of religion. Martyred *jihadis* were interred here, perhaps as divine recompense for waging war in the name of Islam. This gave the Chella, which has a complex identity akin to the large Islamic social institutions seen in Mamluk Cairo and Ottoman Turkey, a quasi-sacral aura into which the Marinids inserted their figurative presence, making pilgrimages to visit the sepulchres of their ancestors. Mosques and sepulchres of diverse groups are present alongside the Marinid necropolis with its pointed horseshoe arch topped by a multilobed blind arch. It is possible to discern in the mausoleum of Sultan Abul Hasan some original decorative motifs and embellishments such as lozenges and *muqarnas* that may have resembled the ornamentation of *madrasas* in Fez. The necropolis perhaps reveals the Marinids' desire to emulate the institution building, a sign of public piety, of the Mamluks. The *madrasa's* ornamental features also relate to Andalusia and to other regions.

Artistic affinities apparent in these monuments defy linear chronological mappings of influence, instead creating a pan-regional visual identity that still abides. The scholar presented this information in a comprehensive seminar for a group of Jnanapravaha's students in four lectures over two evenings. A product of his wide-ranging doctoral research over several years, the seminar focussed a trained eye on an unfamiliar area for this privileged group. **– *J.K.***

Buddhist Aesthetics

FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

Spinning the Wheel of the Dharma: Buddhist Art on the Indian Subcontinent

November 20th, 27th & December 4th, 2020 | Pia Brancaccio (Professor of Art History, Drexel University)

Buddha's First Sermon at Sarnath, 2nd century, Pakistan (ancient region of Gandhara), grey schist, H. 11 1/4 in. (28.6 cm); W. 12 1/4 in. (31.1 cm); D. 2 in. (5.1 cm), Daniel J. Slott , New York (until 1980; donated to MMA)

This short course will examine the main artistic traditions associated with the practice of Buddhism in the ancient Indian subcontinent. The first lecture will discuss visual materials associated with representations of the Buddha and his life, and will survey artistic evidence from the early centers of Bharhut and Sanchi, from Gandhara as well as from Mathura and Sarnath.

The second lecture will explore loci of Buddhist devotion and will focus especially on architecture. It will address how the cult of relics helped in establishing a Buddhist sacred geography on the Subcontinent and will survey the architecture of devotion in India and Sri Lanka, including *stupas* and *chaityas*.

The third lecture will examine Buddhist art in monastic contexts. Monks played key roles as custodians and transmitters of the Buddhist *dharma* – what was the layout of Buddhist monasteries? How were they built? How were they decorated ? Key examples of monastic art and architecture from the regions of Gandhara, Gujarat, the Deccan plateau, and Sri Lanka will be discussed.

CRITICISM & THEORY

Apnavi Makanji | Untitled - Significant Other | 2018 | Courtesy: Vadehra Art Gallery

JPM's Criticism and Theory offerings include (1) a Certificate course in Aesthetics, Criticism, and Theory as well as ongoing public seminars and lectures in the field; (2) an ongoing series of public seminars and lectures in Indian Intellectual Traditions; and (3) occasional academic conferences and workshop in these fields.

Aesthetics, Criticism & Theory

Foucault and Aesthetics

September 15th - October 14th, 2020, 6:30 - 8:30 pm | Dr. Arun Iyer (Assistant Professor - Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Bombay)

Prof. Arun Iyer speaks during 'Foucault and Aesthetics'

Our eight-session course 'Foucault and Aesthetics', with Prof. Arun Iyer from IIT Bombay, kicked off with a warm round of introductions. The virtual format brings us students from Delhi, Bangalore, Pune, Bhopal and Ludhiana but also doctoral candidates as far flung as Chicago. While visual artists and academics make up a substantial percentage of the class, lawyers, marketing professionals and architects are also in the mix. The varied interests and backgrounds of the students indicate the widespread curiosity about Foucault's contribution to aesthetics.

These seminars are a rare opportunity to devote ourselves for four weeks to Foucault's tremendously enriching essays reflecting on artists and artworks of the 20th century, that not only ruptured the trajectory of Western art history but also triggered some of his most important revelations. In three sessions, we have moved from *Las Meninas* to *Ceci N'est Pas Une Pipe* (This is Not a Pipe), breathing each in slowly. Here, I will be charting the class till this half way mark, leaving the more revelatory insights made about Foucault's contributions to uncover the relationship between painting and photography, for our next newsletter.

Before I delve into the content of our lecture-discussions, a quick note about pedagogy. Devoid entirely of secondary reading, in each class, the encounter is with a singular essay alongside images of the paintings interpreted by Foucault. Though seemingly the simplest approach, it is ultimately this slow ricochet between mind, word, and image, the process of reading (and looking) repeatedly with rigour, which seems to have disappeared from foundational courses in aesthetics. Broad surveys and sweeping overviews of an artist's life, too often replace the minute examination and re-examination of meaning. By studying Foucault closely, and restricting our emphasis to his text alone, this course teaches us the art of reading philosophy in relationship to visual art.

Given the immense pressure on our educators in these precarious times, we are extremely grateful to Prof. Iyer for making this much-needed commitment to intensive discursive work.

Around the Room and Back Again

"And the proper name, in this particular context, is merely an artifice: it gives us a finger to point with, in other words, to pass surreptitiously from the space where one speaks to the space where one looks; in other words, to fold one over the other as though they were equivalents. But if one wishes to keep the relation of language to vision open, if one wishes to treat their incompatibility as a starting-point for speech instead of as an obstacle to be avoided, so as to stay as close as possible to both, then one must erase those proper names and preserve the infinity of the task. It is perhaps through the medium of this grey, anonymous language, always over-meticulous and repetitive because it is too broad, that the painting may, little by little, release its illumination."

- p. 9-10, Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*

Though we conventionally refer to 'Las Meninas' as the title of Velazquez's renowned painting, it is surprising to discover that this name was not bestowed by the artist or his patron. However, as the quote above makes clear, this lack of 'true' name is apt, a poignant absence. For the first half of this first chapter of *The Order of Things* (titled *Las Meninas* in English translations but originally titled *Les Suivantes* by Foucault), Foucault chooses not to name Velazquez or any of the other famous figures in the painting (in fact, if he had not included an image of the painting, we may have been left guessing as to Foucault's ekphrastic source for several pages). With this choice, he is not just telling us that classical representation has always tried to hide the gap between name and representation, but he is also showing us the aporias that traditional referential readings, the consistent tethering to nouns, have concealed.

How many philosophical works begin with such a sustained ekphrasis? We are looking at the painting

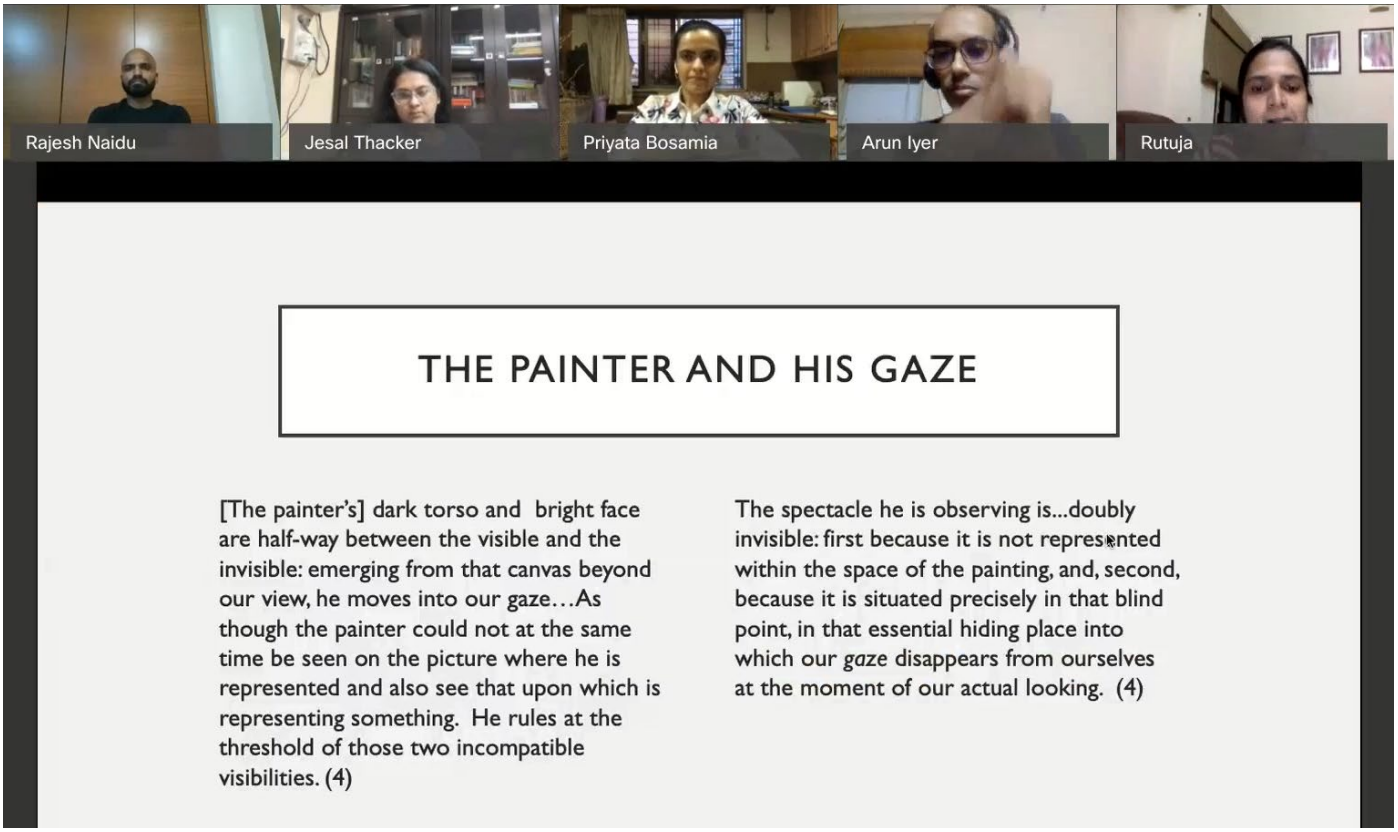
with Foucault. To dwell in the space of a revelatory encounter with any painting is a difficult task, to follow the 'subtle system of feints' that Foucault draws out of the work, is even more arduous for the uninitiated. Without knowing it, we can develop a habit of pursuing biographical detail as the sole key to reading an artwork. The corresponding desire to focus on 'genius' plagues cultural discourse. In class, we were quickly disabused of the idea that anecdotal tidbits of Velazquez's life and times would be helpful in unpacking Foucault's perspective. Foucault's narrative is built around trapping us in his collective 'we', in the gaze of the painter, and the circle of gazes drawn by the painting, and this requires us also to forget biography and historical context, and be in a sustained ahistorical temporal space, the space of viewing. Foucault's ekphrasis humbles Velazquez. Foucault does not describe the artwork, he describes what the act of representing a medium like painting in words means, what words can do for things, and what they can't; what relationship language itself ultimately has to the visible is the underlying question. Though the focus remained on the circles of representation and spatial arrangements within the painting, the very process of bringing to light this question of seeing versus being seen requires a Foucault, a language, a discourse, to reveal itself.

To bring out the principles of visibility and invisibility that the painting exudes, as detailed in the text, Prof. Iyer contrasted Velazquez's masterpiece with Vermeer's *The Art of Painting* produced a decade later. Therefore, rather than a class of art historical debates on whether Foucault got the painting right or wrong, we found ourselves trying to articulate, through the vocabulary of the philosopher himself, how Foucault was structuring the essay to become a mirror for his own argument, a strategic and moving maneuvering of words to not only bring the painting alive, but its deepest contradictions.

Reconstructing the Unravelled Calligram

The first part of our class on *Ceci N'est Pas Une Pipe* was spent discussing why Foucault does not see Magritte's *Les Deux Mysteres* as a contradiction but an unravelled calligram. The idea of the calligram itself had to be severed from the Islamic tradition, where, unlike in the West, the text of the calligram is not always, or often, spelling out what the image depicts. It is the Western notion of the calligram where text and image overlap perfectly on which Foucault is reliant and not the long and complex calligraphic tradition. This particular provocation broke the reverie of cosy universality which we all tend to project on to philosophers like Foucault; it made evident why we must continue to read from different regions and bring diverse discourses into contact with each other. It was a reminder of how tightly bound Foucault is within the Western history of representation.

And yet, if there is a Foucauldian text which has universal resonance in aesthetics, it is this little book; because of his emphasis on the gap we learn to cross as children between picture and description. We are taught to forget that there is a white space in our



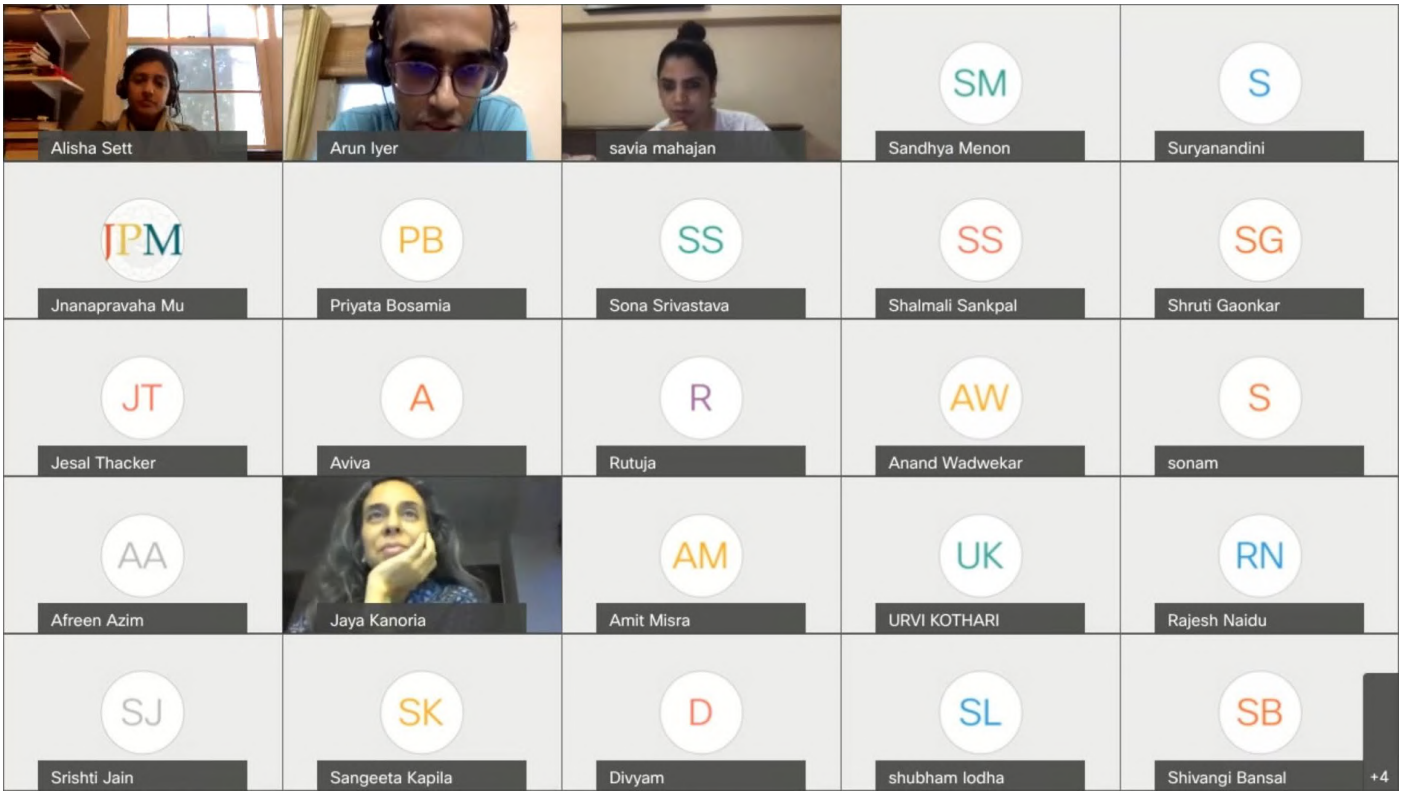
books that we could be lost within, we simply assume that that white binds image and word together; it is a crevasse we can always fall into, but will ourselves into leaping millions of times over the course of our lives. Foucault's Magritte forces us into the uneasy space of dwelling in-between, into the interstice of the drawn and painted pipe and the painted words whose very declarative form dismantle any comfortable acceptance of meaning.

Who else, which painters of the 20th century, break away from the rules of resemblance and fixity of bonds between plastic representation and linguistic reference? Foucault tells us to look again at Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky. As we re-entered Klee's *Villa R* we could see Foucault's argument coming to life, R floated resolutely, signposting the same magnificence and salience as any villa ever painted for posterity.

Foucault's argument about Kandinsky's works, as paintings that resemble themselves and themselves alone was queried by one student, who asked: it is these paintings that give me the freedom to imagine the most, that take me into my own dream world, so why should these be read as confining us to the painting? Prof. Iyer explained that while a *Las Meninas* indicates a path for us to tread (even without proper names), it paints beings and gestures and spaces and light, it uses diagonals and spirals to forcibly resemble something we know, something we feel we can inhabit. Kandinsky's objects do not and cannot represent anything except themselves to us universally, and so while we may travel, each of us individually, almost anywhere in our imaginations, those pathways are not lined with markers, and it is this that prevents us from leaving the space of the painting for an illusory sense of reality. Without the crutch which representational painting provides, the doors to the trappable tangible totems of immediate identification are shut.

So why does Magritte maintain resemblance as well as paint words in the likeness of words as we encounter them elsewhere? Because by doing this, says Foucault, he liberates resemblance from the authority, or tyranny, of representation. To quote Prof. Iyer, "Magritte attacks the separation between plastic representation and writing in a manner orthogonal to Klee", i.e., the attack is via discourse. While we plunged into the autonomous discourse of things vis-à-vis the autonomy of resemblance in Magritte, we finally ended up in his non-place, in the void, in the graveyard of representation through Magritte's coffins, to the deadness inherent in representative painting because of its incessant breeding of validation, of easy recognition.

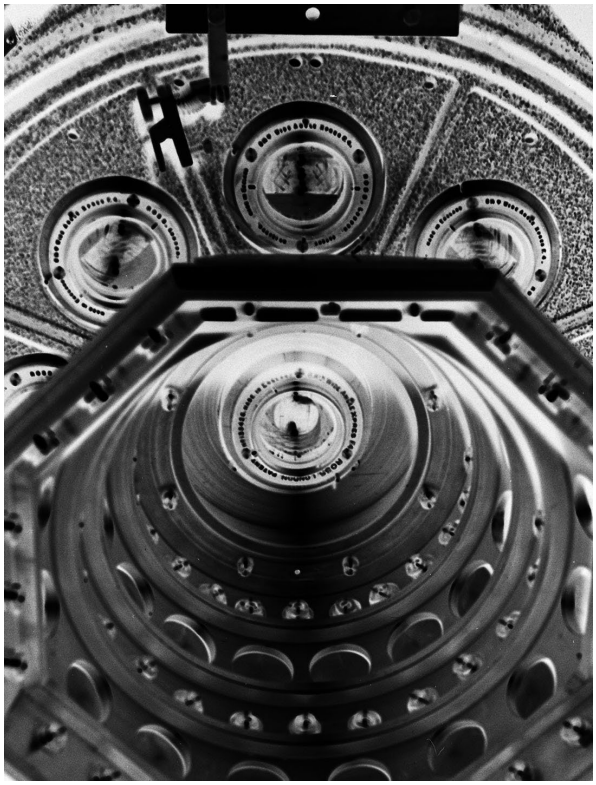
The final debate remained about the question of responsibility. Does *Ceci N'est Pas Une Pipe*, especially in ending with the words, "Campbell. Campbell. Campbell. Campbell.", liberate the painter or the viewer of all responsibility? Does Foucault go too far in seeing the advantage of similitude? Were classical painters also trying to desperately tell us something about real life? Is it the logic of capitalism we then see revealed in those final words? These questions hung echoing at the end of the third session. **– *A.S.***



FORTHCOMING PROGRAMMES

Discourse, Theory, Photography

October 13th, 15th, 20th, 22th, 27th, 29th, November 3rd & 5th, 2020, 6:00 - 8:30 pm | Dr. Jan Babnik (Editor, Curator, Lecturer and Writer)



Harris & Ewing, 9-lens aerial mapping camera made by the Fairchild Aerial Camera Corp. for the U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey. 1936. American Library of Congress

From the early belief in photography as the magical emanation of reality to the contemporary belief in its dissolution into pure data, to become information embedded in the algorithmic apparatus, through the course of its history, photography has undergone several key mutations, and with them profound changes of its understanding. The notion of what, how and where photography is, is becoming more and more obscure today. Through the writings of prominent scholars such as Vilém Flusser, Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, Andre Bazin, Jacques Rancière, Martha Rosler, and Allan Sekula, we will re-examine foundational concepts in photographic theory such as: iconicity, indexicality, connotation, profilmic and several others over eight postgraduate seminars.

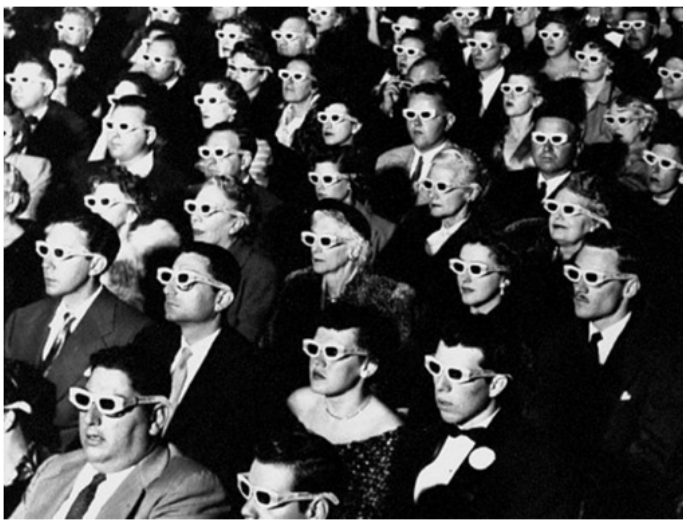
Special attention will be given to the relationship between photography and discourse. How does theoretical discourse form and frame its objects? How is photography itself caught in-between being an object, process, image, and discourse; something we conceptualise, practice, observe, participate in, look through and look at?

Through key texts and examples from literature, art and myriad photographic practices, seminar participants will reach a better understanding of photography and be invited to critically reflect on the genesis of the core concepts through which it is framed. Reading before class and being prepared for discussion is a requirement.

Techniques of Enchantment: An Introduction to Art & Media

January 5th, 7th, 12th, 14th, 19th, 21st, 25th & 28th, 2020, 6:00 - 8:30 pm | Dr. Boris Čučković Berger (Associate Lecturer, The Courtauld Institute of Art)

For the German sociologist Max Weber, the modern world was characterised by its disenchantment: reason becoming more valued than belief. Many artists and critical theorists have since disagreed with this assessment. Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes considered myths to be fundamental features of life under commodity culture, from cinema to advertisement. Consequently, the advent of mass media directed a substantial portion of artistic energies to critically disenchant the captivating powers of spectacle. Students of this course will trace the manifold historical interactions of art and media, not only to increase their visual repertoire, but also to enable their critical reflection on the conscious or unconscious choices that come attached with media techniques. From 'fake' happenings in Argentinian conceptual art to the immersive virtual reality installations of Olafur Eliasson, we will look into the fraught relationship of media and reality. From the sets of Sergei Eisenstein's historical epics to Ubisoft's approach to historical re-enactment in video games like Assassin's Creed, we will observe what it means to enchant the appearance of a world.



J.R. Eyerman, photo taken in Paramount Theater, Hollywood, California, November 26, 1952. Better known as the source image for the cover page of Guy Debord's Society of the Spectacle.

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STUDENT REVIEW

Ibrahim Adil Shah II and the *Pen Nem*

Sachi Mavinkurve - *JPM Alumna*

The landscape is pink and lilac, flowers are as large as human heads, birds are larger than rams; the scale is mutable. Lovers spray gold as they speak, forests resemble sparkling emeralds, longing sets lovers aflame, and moods and emotions overtake reality in the world of innumerable depictions, all found in *Deccani* court paintings between the 16th and 18th centuries. During this period, Ibrahim Adil Shah II, the intensely sensitive, creative and romantic ruler of Bijapur, was the greatest patron of art, literature and music in the Deccan.[1] The Bijapur idiom of painting matured during his reign.[2] Zebrowski compares his influence on *Deccani* art to that of the Mughal emperor Akbar, whose contribution transformed Mughal art.[3] Unlike Akbar, Ibrahim maintained a child-like innocence with respect to the subjects of art, and unlike their realistic counterparts, *Bijapuri* paintings were heavily charged with emotion.[4] Zebrowski argues that while Ibrahim was known to be a great painter, poet and musician, his real talent lay in his ability to draw out works of genius from the poets and painters of his court.[5] The Shah nurtured the art of numerous poets, artists and writers who immigrated to the Deccan in search of patronage. A patron's preferences, influences and upbringing merged with the imagination of artists of their court. This merger played an enormous role in the subject matter and style of painting. One of the priceless works of art created in this period was the *Pen Nem*. This essay aims to delve into the role of Ibrahim Adil Shah II as a patron, examining his tastes and preferences, as well as the traits of *Deccani* painting, and the significance of the *Pen Nem*, including an analysis of the eighth painting of the manuscript for its style and visual representation of Sufi concepts.

I. The *Pen Nem*

The Sufi romance called *Pen Nem* was written by Hasan Manju Khalji, who bore the pen name 'Hans'. The manuscript was written in the Adil Shahi court between 1591-1604, but the dates of completion of the paintings are unclear.[6] '*Pen Nem*' is translatable to 'The Rules of Love'. It belongs to the *Prem Marg* (Path of Love) genre of Sufi literature,[7] with its central feature of narrating a spiritual quest through the trope of a love story.[8] Hans used the *masnavi* format of narrative poems in couplets, which he wrote in *Dakhani*, a form of Urdu which was written and developed in the kingdoms of the medieval Deccan.[9]

The story begins with the hero, Shah Ji, encountering an image of Mah Ji, whom he has not seen in person, brought to him by a tortoise. Meanwhile, Mah Ji receives a similar portrait of Shah Ji. They fall deeply in love with these images.[10] Shah Ji then leaves the kingdom of Kuldip in search of Mah Ji. He eventually reaches

1 Zebrowski, Mark. *Deccani Painting*. New Delhi. Roli Books International. 1983. p. 67.
2 Haidar, Navina Najat and Sardar, Marika. *Sultans of Deccan India 1500-1700 Opulence and Fantasy. New York*. Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2015. p. 79.
3 Zebrowski, Mark. *Deccani Painting*. New Delhi. Roli Books International. 1983. p. 67.
4 Ibid. p. 73.
5 Ibid. p. 67.
6 Hutton, Deborah. "The Pen Nem: A Sixteenth-Century Illustrated Romance from Bijapur." *Sultans of the South: Arts of India's Deccan Courts, 1323-1687*, edited by Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar, New York. Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2011. p. 44-45.
7 Ibid.
8 Sobers-Khan, Nur. "Pem nem: a 16th-century Urdu romance goes on-line" British Library Blog, https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2017/06/pem-nem-a-16th-century-urdu-romance-goes-on-line.html#
9 Matthews, D. J. "Eighty Years of Dakani Scholarship", *The Annual of Urdu Studies 8*. 1993. 91-108.
10 Sobers-Khan, Nur. "Pem nem: a 16th-century Urdu romance goes on-line" British Library Blog, https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2017/06/pem-nem-a-16th-century-urdu-romance-goes-on-line.html#

the island of Sangaldip, which is ruled by his uncle, where Mah Ji resides.[11] His love for her is depicted by her picture on his chest in all illustrations of the manuscript. This was a unique and fresh visual representation of ardour in its time. Shah Ji faints upon seeing Mah Ji. Later, he starts to believe that the image on his heart is reality and Mah Ji, a mere reflection. Shah Ji then abandons Mah Ji, and goes through a *Dara Kaan*, a period of longing and lamentation spanning 12 months of the Hindu calendar.[12] Hans thus integrates the Indic *baramasa* genre, which depicts the emotions of lovers through the landscape as seen in each of the twelve months, into the Persian *masnavi* tradition of narrative verse.[13] During this period of abandonment, Mah Ji is depicted in literal flames to represent longing for her absent lover. Mah Ji is painted as melancholy and aloof in scenes of amusement with her companions. After a year of solitary contemplation, Shah Ji realises his error and returns to the palace. Consequently, Shah Ji and Mah Ji are married. In the *Prem Marg* genre, the union of the lover and beloved is a metaphor for the union of the soul with God; the soul comes to the right path after mistaking the image, the *majaz* or symbol (in this case the image of Mah Ji on Shah Ji's chest) for *haqiqa*, or truth.[14]

Twelve out of the 34 illustrations in the manuscript represent the celebrations surrounding the wedding of Shah Ji with Mah Ji. Hutton argues that because the women in these paintings far exceed the number of men, and as a large proportion of paintings are dedicated to wedding preparations and ceremonies, the manuscript was most likely made to cater to women.[15] I would like to argue that the number of women in the paintings who witness the love of Shah Ji and Mah Ji unfolding is not necessarily indicative of the intended audience. There are three illustrations depicting Mah Ji longing for her lover after abandonment, and none for Shah Ji. Ibrahim Adil Shah II was known to have deeply appreciated the *Bhakti* movement in which feelings of love are often expressed in the form of a lady waiting for the return of her lover, which may be the reason for the nature of these depictions.[16]

Figure 1. Eighth painting of the Pen Nem

II. The Painting

This painting (Figure 1) is the eighth in a collection of 34 rendered in ink, opaque watercolour, gold and silver.[17] It depicts Shah Ji sitting outdoors, on an ornate carpet, with his paternal uncle, the king

11 Hutton, Deborah. "The Pen Nem: A Sixteenth-Century Illustrated Romance from Bijapur." *Sultans of the South: Arts of India's Deccan Courts, 1323-1687*, edited by Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar, New York. Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2011. p. 47.

12 Ibid.

13 Sobers-Khan, Nur. "Pem Nem: a 16th-century Urdu romance goes on-line" British Library Blog, https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2017/06/pem-nem-a-16th-century-urdu-romance-goes-on-line.html#

14 Ibid.

15 Hutton, Deborah. "The Pen Nem: A Sixteenth-Century Illustrated Romance from Bijapur." *Sultans of the South: Arts of India's Deccan Courts, 1323-1687*, edited by Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar, New York. Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2011. P. 51.

16 Matthews, D. J. "Eighty Years of Dakani Scholarship", *The Annual of Urdu Studies 8*. 1993. pp. 91-108.

17 Hutton, Deborah. "The Pen Nem: A Sixteenth-Century Illustrated Romance from Bijapur." *Sultans of the South: Arts of India's Deccan Courts, 1323-1687*, edited by Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar, New York. Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2011. p. 45.

of Sangaldip, just as Mah Ji walks in with her attendants. Shah Ji faints at the sight of Mah Ji, his beloved, whose image is on his heart. The scene is illustrated beautifully. The king appears to be astonished and worried. The attendants beside Mah Ji look extremely amused. An attendant at the bottom of the painting and another next to Mah Ji are covering their faces, as if to stop themselves from laughing at this visitor, madly in love with Mah Ji. The attendant fanning Mah Ji is trying to look above Mah Ji's head to get a glimpse of what is happening. Mah Ji is smiling calmly, as if anticipating this reaction from her beloved, and as if this entire quest was something of her own creation. Shah Ji is wearing a red and golden conical turban, and his facial features resemble an early portrait of Ibrahim Adil Shah II as an adolescent (Figure 3) attributed to "the Bikaner painter" at the court. Hans praises Ibrahim at the beginning of the *Pen Nem*,[18] and it is likely that the ruler saw something of himself in the young Shah Ji and his quest for union with God. The king of Sangaldip is wearing a white and golden conical turban and a golden floral shawl as in the portrait 'Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah II holding castanets' (Figure 4) attributed to "the Bodleian painter". The king depicted in other paintings of the *Pen Nem* shows a resemblance to portraits of Ibrahim as an adult.

Figure 2. Detail of Eighth painting of the Pen Nem: Shah Ji faints away at his first sight of Mah Ji

Figure 3. Portrait of Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah II of Bijapur (as an adolescent)

Figure 4. Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah II holding castanets

The eighth painting depicts the sky with a blue band and golden clouds that appear to be inspired by motifs seen in Chinese art. These clouds appear to be moving swiftly towards one side of the painting, as if pushed by a strong gust of wind. The sky beneath the blue band is painted in gold. The trees in the background are bent in the same direction by the strong wind. There are two storks standing by a stream of water that runs through the lush landscape. One calmly drinks water from this stream, while the other looks towards the wind, as if anticipating something of great significance. Storks in Islamic art

18 Ibid. p. 44.

represent eternity, which is signified through a balance between two partners.[19] The two storks may represent Shah Ji and Mah Ji – the seeker and his beloved (the two partners) – in balance. The rocks in the landscape are pink and lilac, as if the love Shah Ji and Mah Ji feel for each other were mirrored by the rocks. There is freshness in the landscape and little flowers bloom behind the characters, hinting at blossoming love. There is a tree abloom with oversized flowers which is a common feature in the *Deccani* paintings of the period. Oversized flowers were also seen in paintings of Shah Tahmasp's *Shahnama*,[20] which inspired the Adil Shahs of Bijapur. Behind the tree is a shepherd who is watching the event taking place. He appears to be playing a flute, while sheep gather around him. This painting has many intricate details such as folds in fabric, loose strands of hair, blades of grass, flower petals and the ridges of rocks. Shading in this painting uses line work over stippling, which allows the above elements to be showcased well. Thin strokes give the painting a sense of dynamism. There is an element of movement throughout the landscape.

Figure 5. A sectional close-up of the eighth painting of the Pen Nem

This painting is rich with symbolism, emotions, mystical poetry and Sufi themes. On one level, the painting is of Shah Ji fainting, overcome by Mah Ji's beauty, much to a bystander's amusement. On another level, it is a story told through the landscape: it communicates beauty, fantasy, and also the beginning of a new phase in Shah Ji's quest. This interpretation relates to three phases of *ishq* or love in Sufism - longing, proximity and intimacy.[21] In this image, Shah Ji goes from longing and searching through faraway lands for his beloved, to finally meeting her. He transitions from longing to proximity.

Ibrahim Adil Shah II was a product of a culture which alternated between Indian cultural values and concepts from the Islamic Middle East, with an aesthete's attachment to the beauty of both civilisations.[22] Therefore, he brought a synthesis of Hinduism, Islam, Persian and local Indian aesthetics into the art of his time in a manner that was not seen before.

19 Aziz, Khursheed Kamal. *The Meaning of Islamic Art: Explorations in Religious Symbolism*, vol 1. New Delhi. Adam Publishers. 2004. p. 941.

20 Leoni, Francesca. "The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp" Metropolitan Museum of Art, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/shnm/hd_shnm.htm

21 Hutton, Deborah. "The Pen Nem: A Sixteenth-Century Illustrated Romance from Bijapur." *Sultans of the South: Arts of India's Deccan Courts, 1323-1687*, edited by Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar, New York. Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2011. p. 51.

22 Zebrowski, Mark. *Deccani Painting*. New Delhi. Roli Books International. 1983. p. 73.

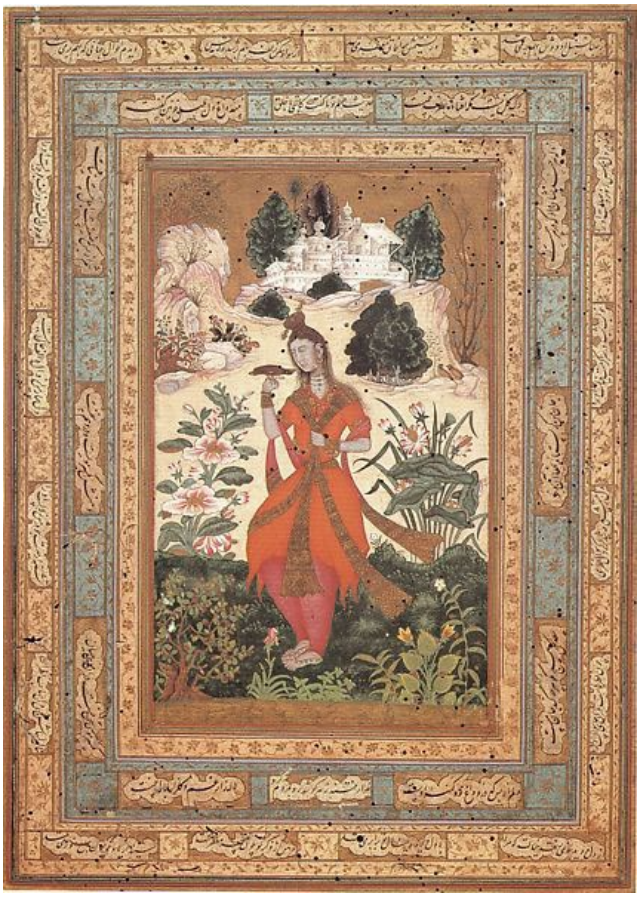

Figure 6. Yogini in a Deccan Landscape

The 34 paintings in the manuscript are attributed to three artists. The eighth painting is attributed to the artist known as the Dublin painter who also painted the *yogini* (Figure 6) in the Chester Beatty Library. Hutton writes that Mah Ji and the *yogini* have similar facial features.[23] Several similarities are shown between the brightly coloured costumes, whimsical landscape and the faraway palace in the painting of Mah Ji, and the *yogini* of the Chester Beatty Library. Hutton believes the female figures of the *Pen Nem* paintings were the inspiration for the Chester Beatty Library *yogini*.[24] The figure of the female attendant at the bottom left side of this painting, and the dancing attendants in the other paintings of the *Pem Nem* bear resemblance to the figures in paintings from the *Nujum-al-Ulum*, written and illustrated during the reign of Ali Adil Shah I. The attendants in the *Pen Nem* wear similar oversized round earrings as those in the *Nujum-al-Ulum*. Paintings in the 16th and early 17th centuries display early signs of Mughal influence. The figures of the protagonists are relatively proportionate, which may be indicative of the influence of the realism of Mughal art, especially the approach to representing body mass, proportion and movement.

Bijapuri paintings in Ibrahim Adil Shah II's reign were always enlivened with emotion. The bright colour palette, flamboyant shapes, and the sense of motion captured in the paintings stir the viewer. Zebrowski surmises that the emotional charge of these paintings must have struck a chord in Ibrahim's heart, and that perhaps emotion was everything to him.[25] The *Pen Nem* manuscript depicts everything dear to him: music, dance, art, fine textiles and ostentatious celebrations are aplenty in every painting. Moreover, the hero Shah Ji appears to be painted in his likeness. His need to be roused by art, his sensitivity, and his deep respect for the theory of the nine *rasas* undoubtedly played a role in shaping the nature of *Bijapuri* art, thus rendering the artwork (*Pen Nem*, in this case) and the patron inseparable.

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24 Ibid.

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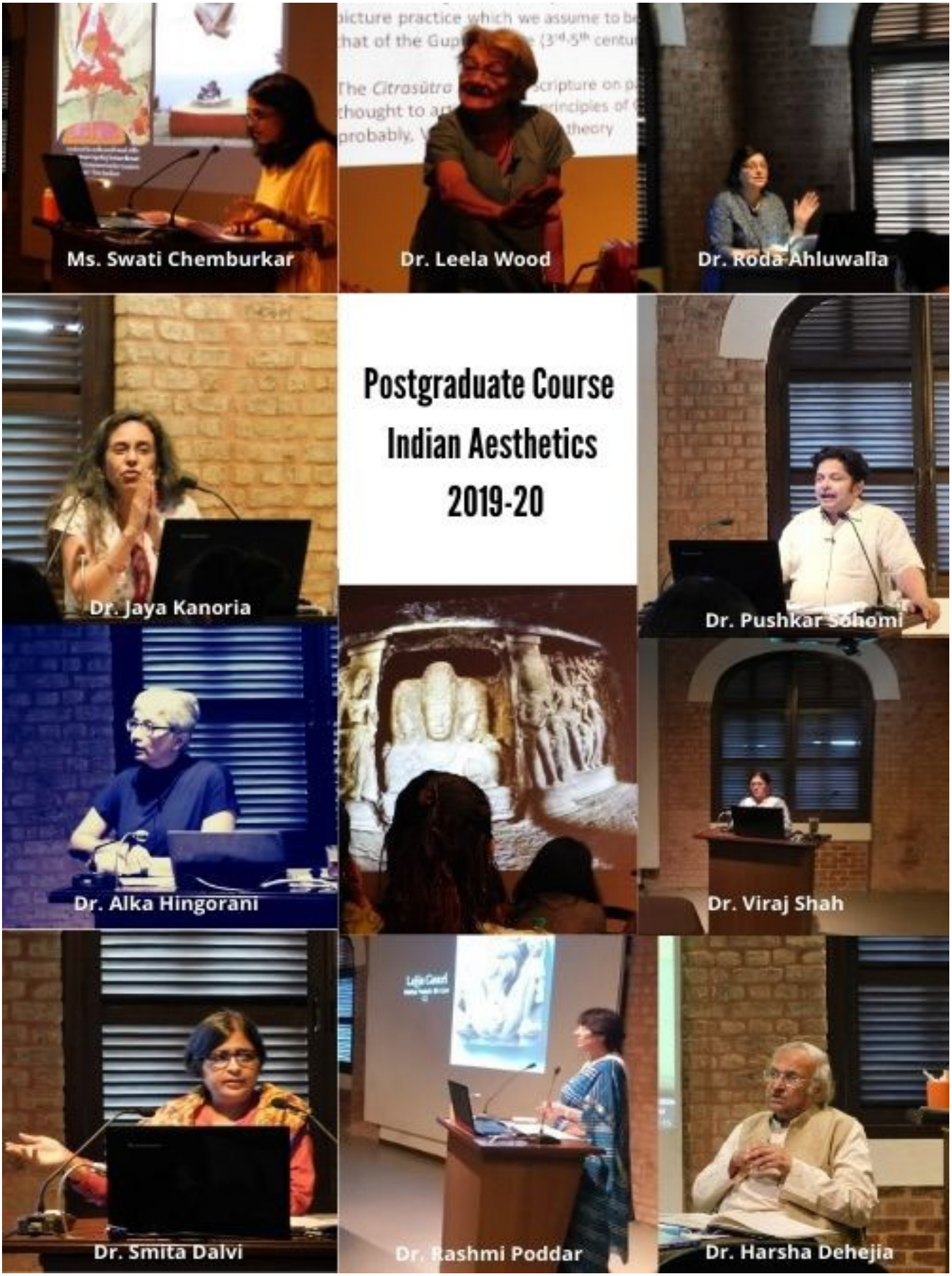

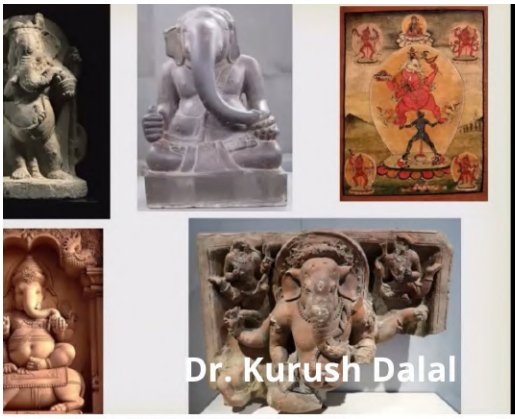

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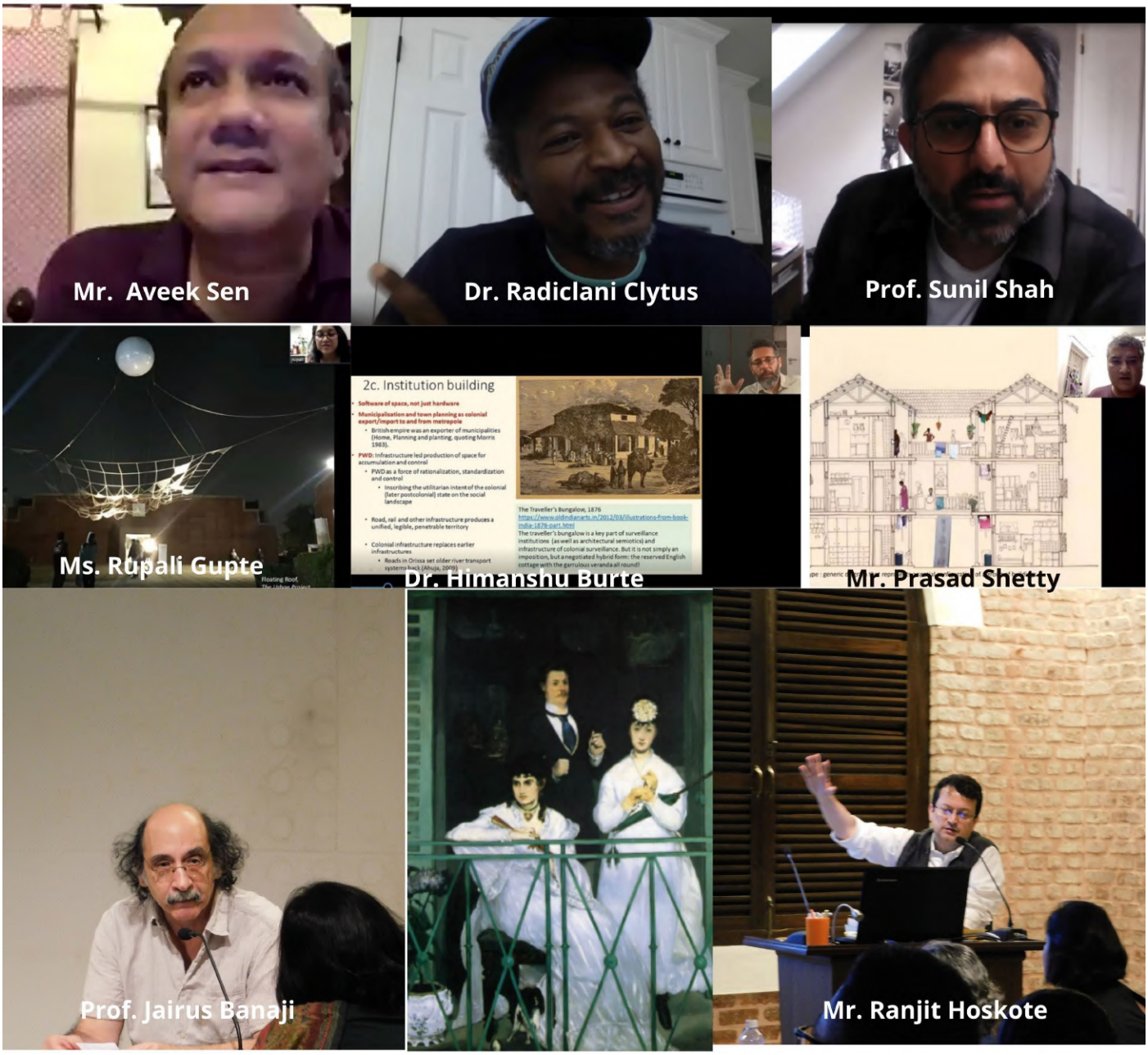

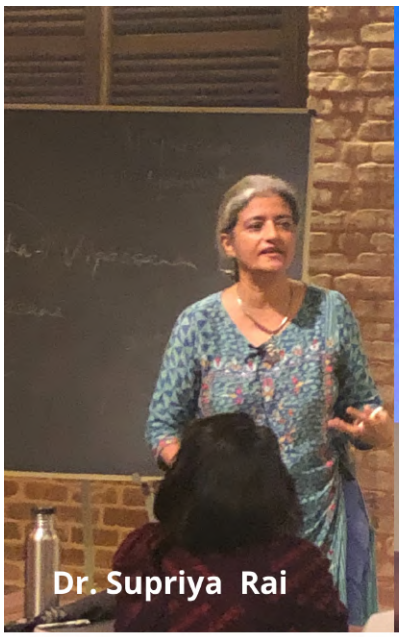
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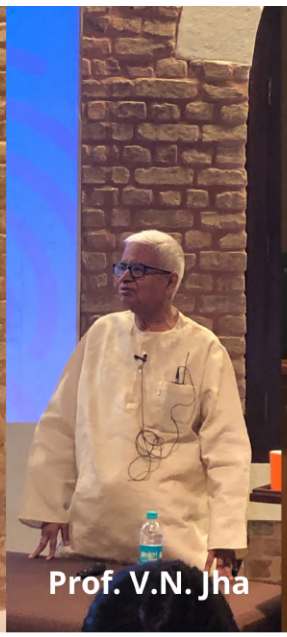
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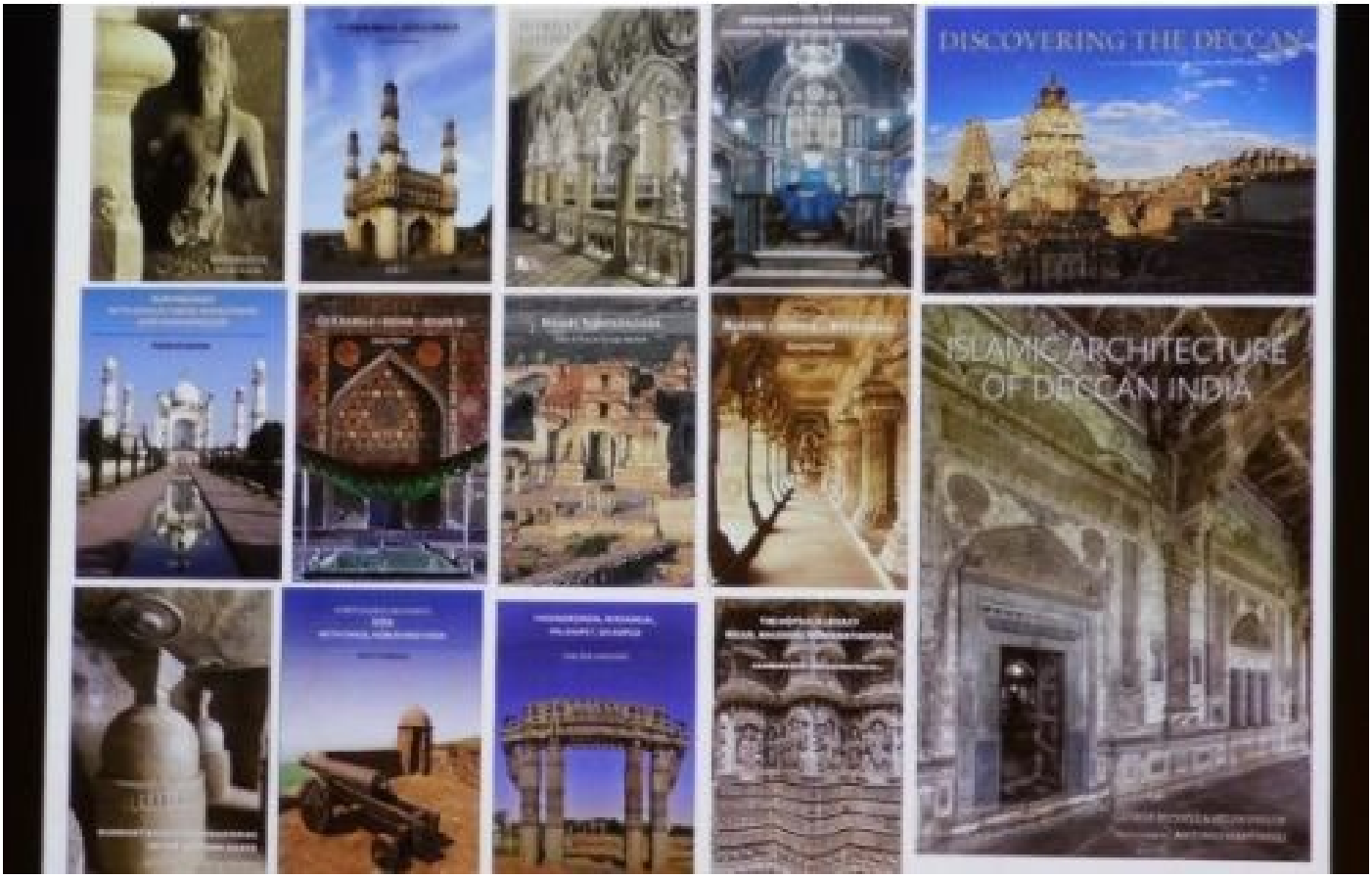


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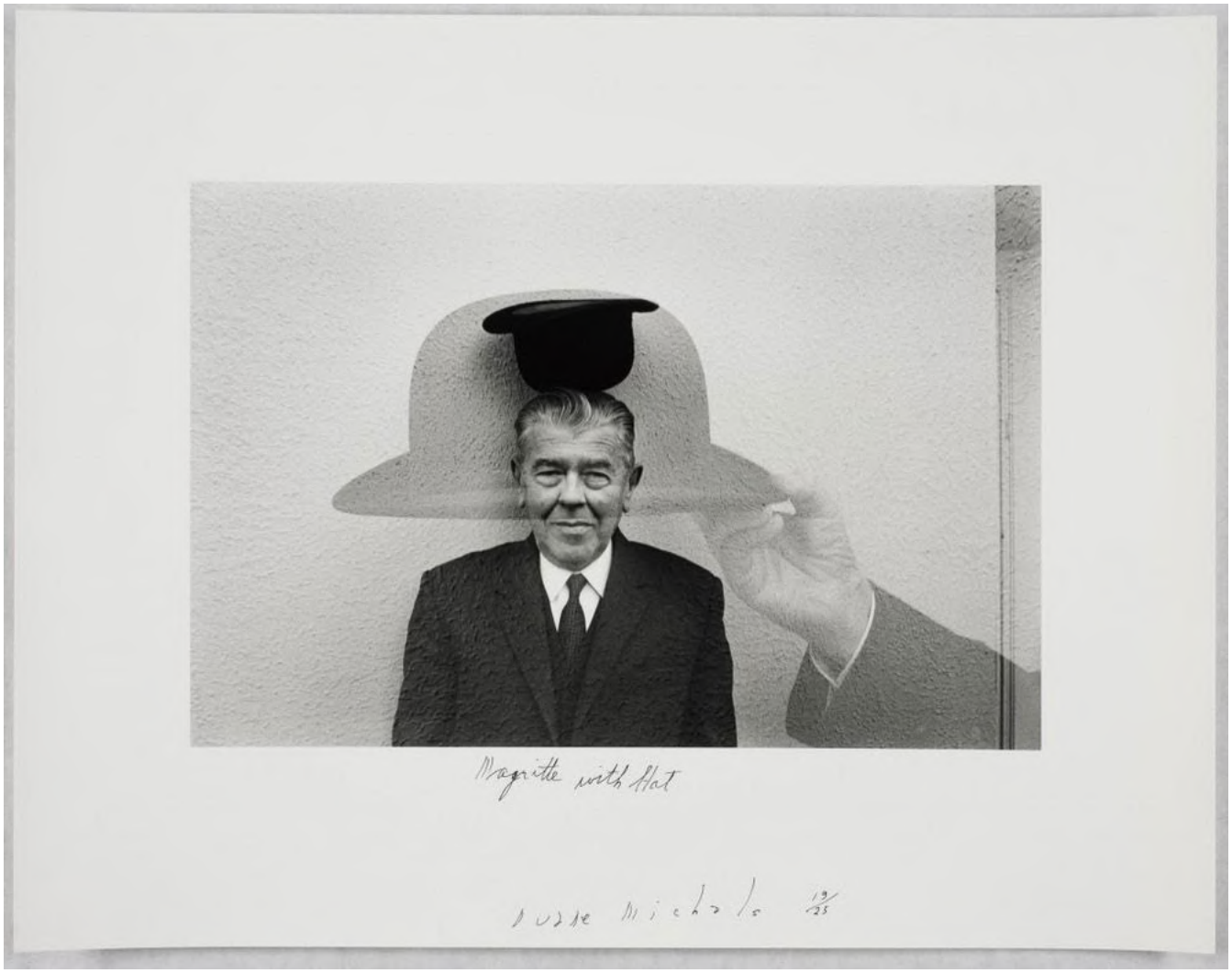

Magritte with Hat, 1965, Duane Michals

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