Jnanapravaha

JNANAPRAVAHA MUMBAI

QUARTERLY

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2023

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Director's Note

As we begin our 16th academic year in July, there is quiet satisfaction in that several of our alumni have gone on to study at prestigious institutions worldwide, have made fresh careers or garnered enviable skills for their current jobs. Accolades have come their way. The most recent is Ragini Sirugiri who has been awarded the prestigious 2023 Inlaks Shivdasani scholarship to study her Master's in the UK. Ragini completed the Indian Aesthetics (IA) Diploma in 2020-2021. We are given to believe that a major part of the selection panel's questions in her final interview were about her learning during the IA course. In retrospect, Ragini feels that the course truly enabled her to think about her practice in graphic art in a deeper way and has expressed much gratitude to the Jnanapravaha team led by the IA Course Director for this. Kudos to all! We know we have made a difference and are determined to keep braving through various frontiers.

The upcoming year is no exception. We, as always, kickstart with our flagship year-long Indian Aesthetics course, to which additions and changes have been made specially in regard to creative processes and practices whereby artists are encountered in first person and not mediated through the voices of scholars and curators.

We then quickly change gear to unravel the rich bounty of Indian Temples across space and time. Beginning August 2023, through 16 weekly sessions, the glories of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain temples ranging from the 3rd century BCE to contemporary times will be contextualised through a variety of prisms – form, iconography, patronage, ritual, texts, socio-cultural histories, and the imaginings of sacred landscape. Typologies will be questioned, whether dynastic, religious or geographic. The goal is to ultimately showcase the beauty and power of these architectural wonders and explore their importance in the lives of the people they serve/d.

The world of museums with their existing difficulties and shifting missions are our next focus. Under pressure as never before, whether it be issues of identity, indigeneity or repatriation, to name a few, today is a critical moment of rupture in the life of the *'Museum'* which asks what forms repair could take. Over a fourteen-session Public Lecture Series titled *An Uncomfortable Tour Through the Museum*, we will examine contemporary debates on its entangled past, its current crisis, and possible futures. Considering a broad understanding of the museum as a site for a public encounter with art, culture, politics, and history, the series will engage with scholars, artists, and curators at the forefront of these debates. Apart from analysing traditional forms of museums, the course which starts in October 2023, also considers the exhibition, the biennale, the art fair, physical and online spaces, and collective forms of creative organising as critical sites of inquiry.

There is much more on the anvil as we go along, and we hope to encounter you on the way.

With my warmest wishes,

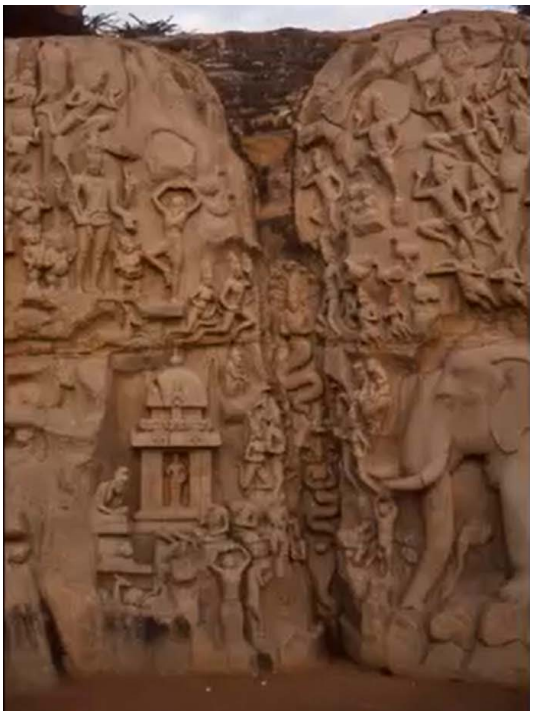
Rashmi Poddar Ph.D.
Director

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 yearlong 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 & 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 Southasian Painting; and (7) occasional academic conferences and workshops in these fields.

Indian Aesthetics



A pioneering hybrid iteration of Jnanapravaha's Indian Aesthetics (IA) course was completed this April. IA lectures, held simultaneously in physical and online mode, have been extremely successful; the course continues to be a unique effort offering unusual depth and intellectual stimulation. After a hiatus of two years, local and domestic students, some of whom travelled especially for the experience, were able to enjoy our sensitively restored heritage premises; at the same time students located internationally (in USA, UK and Germany) and remotely within the country were able to complete the course. Resource scholars for IA 2022-23 were drawn from a wide geography: Dr. Crispin Branfoot lectured online from London and Dr. Parul Singh was in Germany, while other resource scholars were in diverse Indian cities such as Delhi, Gurugram, Kolkata and Pune, bringing fresh voices and expertise to the course.

Archaeology, architecture, anthropology, literature, philosophy,

and religion were as usual amalgamated with history and art history to make the content of the IA course a comprehensive overview of 5,000 years of visual meaning-making in South Asia. As many as 49 students enrolled in the course, which runs for four hours every Saturday afternoon apart from the odd Friday evening engagement. Each session is an extensively illustrated visual delight, familiarising our students with significant examples of Indic art presented in historical and philosophical context. Scholars encouraged discussion and questions, answering them at length; they included references to political, economic, social, and cultural background wherever relevant. Most students attended regularly, though some found this year challenging as workspaces resumed activity with an unprecedented intensity due to the subsiding of the pandemic. After a brief orientation session, we began with Dr. Rashmi Poddar's introduction to classical Indian aesthetics where the scaffolding of particular Sanskrit texts and philosophical tenets provides a frame for the study of Indic visual culture. Bharata's concept of *rasa* ('taste' or 'relish' which forms the basis of aesthetic experience) as elucidated in the dramaturgical treatise *Natyashastra* was applied fruitfully to the Indic visual arts. Formal concepts such as rhythm, harmony, iconometry, materiality, line, colour, and proportion were explored in analysing the content, subject matter, and meaning of art. Iconography, iconology and symbolism were harnessed to further reveal the significance of this subject matter. Dr. Veena Londhe delved into Sanskrit poetics and the *Rasa sutra* in relation to the work of the medieval Kashmiri scholar Abhinavagupta, whose work on *dhvani* or suggestion in poetry can be extended to visual art.

Early in the course, Dr. Kurush Dalal presented a comprehensive overview of recent research on the material remains of the Indus Valley Civilisation, Dr. Naman Ahuja showed how early Sunga terracottas reveal much about the trade links between West Asia and South Asia at this time, while the role of numismatics in revealing Satavahana history was elaborated by Dr. Shailendra Bhandare. Buddhist philosophy which found expression in the major schools of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana, and multifarious minor sects, the narrative tradition of the *jatakas* and the *avadanas* that bolsters these philosophies, and the artistic expression which supported them were discussed by Dr. Supriya Rai and Swati Chemburkar. The latter also delved into the political aspects of Tibetan Buddhism and some medical texts which reveal much about tantric Buddhism. Dr. Viraj Shah's thorough exploration of Jain philosophy, art, as well as religious tenets and narratives culminated with a presentation of her primary research on the Jain caves of the Western Deccan.

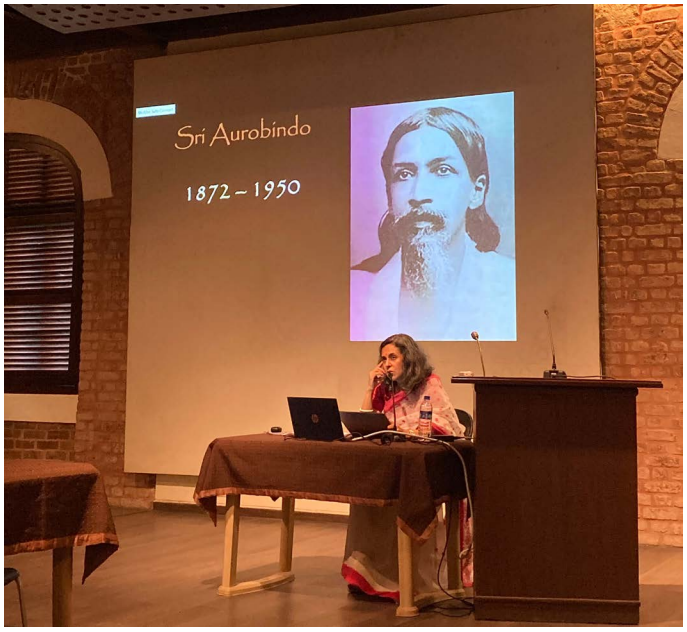
Vignettes of the expansive and variegated iconographical expressions of Vedic and Hindu *Agamic* traditions were presented to IA students by Arvind Sethi. These sessions included many representations of major and minor deities whose roles and worship evolved and altered through time: Shiva, Vishnu, Surya, Ganesha, the *navagrahas* and the *dikpalas*. Dr. Rashmi Poddar delved deep into the divine feminine in her sessions on Devi and Shakti and unravelled the tangled skein of esoteric tantric systems through an understanding of the philosophy that undergirded them. Dr. Pushkar Sohoni, Dr. Crispin Branfoot and Kamalika Bose explored temple

architecture across the centuries and from a wide geographical swathe of the subcontinent. Islamic funerary architecture was introduced to the students by Dr. Riyaz Latif who first presented a highly compressed but comprehensive summary of the genre using West Asian examples before exploring the many expressions across the subcontinent. His sessions included not only the grand examples of the genre but also focussed on local and modern-era Islamic tombs.

From January until March, the IA course focussed on painting, commencing with an exploration of the magnificent murals found at the Ajanta Caves by Dr. Leela Wood. Dr. Kavita Singh then mapped the multipronged journey of Indic painting from the 14th to the 16th centuries through early Buddhist palm leaf manuscripts, Jain manuscripts and scrolls as well as Deccani manuscripts, also elaborating on the *Chaurapanchashika* style. A broad survey of Mughal, Pahari, Rajput, and Deccani painting by Roda Ahluwalia offered a nuanced yet comprehensive understanding of the subject. Mrinalini Sil and Dr. Parul Singh offered glimpses of late 17th- and 18th-century painting at Murshidabad and Awadh which blossomed as these regions broke free of Mughal rule. Krishna *shringara*, in which the divine is apprehended and enjoyed through the senses, engenders a singular philosophical vantage point. This means of connecting with the divine was elaborated in sessions by Dr. Harsha Dehejia. Devotional centres still linked to such sensory practices such as Nathdwara and Puri were discussed in some detail.

Dr. Himanshu Prabha Ray's session presented a brief overview of Indian maritime historiography which links the subcontinent to lands across seas and oceans, such as Southeast Asia, West Asia and coastal Africa. The second half of her session focussed on the probable audiences of some coastal shrines, the orientation of which reveals the subcontinent's littoral history in intriguing ways. The Yemeni island of Socotra located in the Indian Ocean, where Brahmi inscriptions and those in other languages have been found in the Hoq Cave, is a particularly significant example of a coastal location connected to the subcontinent.

Dr. Jaya Kanoria's session titled 'Orientalism' began the section of the course that dwelt on colonial, modern and contemporary aesthetics and art. Edward Said's ideas as expressed in *Orientalism* underpinned her critical examination of Company painting and other art produced in the subcontinent during the colonial period. She also discussed the effect of colonisation on indigenous arts, artefacts and 'crafts', and the various exhibitions of such production in the metropole that inflected their trajectory. Dr. Suryanandini Narain's session on photography in the colonial era presented a nuanced analysis of the medium and its various avatars as coloniser and colonised used it for different purposes during this time.



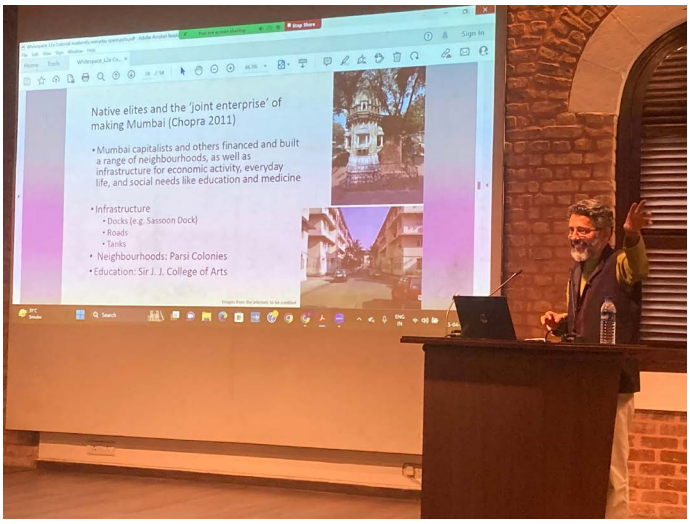
Dr. Jaya Kanoria speaks during 'Indian Aesthetics in the Early 20th century – Rabindranath Tagore and Aurobindo Ghosh'

In April, early-20th-century Indian aesthetics was examined through the lens of two literary giants who shaped the period through their artistic, political, social, and cultural engagements: Rabindranath Tagore and Aurobindo Ghosh. In her session on the art and thought of these seminal figures, Dr. Jaya Kanoria presented a many-sided discussion of their idealistic aesthetic proclivities and choices which were perhaps flawed but continue to be remarkably influential.

The course then moved to colonial architecture: Dr. Pushkar Sohoni's compressed yet comprehensive overview of Indian examples of this genre of architecture oriented students to the subject. The scholar then presented his primary research on the colonial market hall. His detailed and careful analysis of various examples of such markets, located in large cities and towns throughout the subcontinent, revealed that

architecture, though designed to fulfil particular functions, often produces unforeseen results that outstrip or defeat these very purposes.

Dr. Himanshu Burte's session relied on the concept of 'whitespace', one that he has elaborated as a category in his understanding of modern architecture in India, which he sees as a long, only partially successful, attempt to shake off the colonial mindset. In his opinion, only a few exceptional practitioners such as B.V. Doshi and Laurie Baker were able to make such modern architecture in the subcontinent truly 'Indian', that is, truly suitable for the environs in which it is built.



Dr. Himanshu Burte speaks during 'Whitespace: the Continuing Coloniality of Modern Indian Space (and What to Do About It)'

The Indian Aesthetics course closed with a talk by Dr. Zehra Jumabhoy from the University of Bristol. The talk focussed on the work of 'brown' British artists such as the Singh twins, Yinka Shonibare, and especially Raqib Shaw, whose childhood was spent in Kashmir, to show that the imperial past and diasporic art remain important in the present time due to its relentless engagement with issues of not only identity but also coloniality. An examination of such postcolonial art engages with important political questions in the so-called globalised world.

Jnanapravaha maintained its drive towards academic excellence by continuing to provide specially curated readings and bibliographies for each session of the IA course. These were available on our learning management portal JPM Think. Of the 34 students enrolled in the IA diploma, those who engaged with the assignments have been through a demanding process which involves selecting topics and discussing these and related images along with authentic source material with Dr. Jaya Kanoria before writing their academic essays and thesis. All assignments received extensive feedback and students were given the opportunity to revise their work. As in other years, two evening sessions on the basics of academic writing held early in the course by Dr. Kanoria oriented students to the requirements of the IA Diploma and helped them read and write more effectively. Several alumni have written in to inform us that their essays, first written for the IA course, have found publishers. This year too, it is wonderful that students have written theses on a wide variety of topics, some of which are: 'Forging the Material Culture of Colonial India: The Role of Cast Iron (1850-1950)', 'An iconographic study of thirty-two forms of Ganapathi in text, painting and sculpture', 'Narrative Technique in a Pahari *Ramayana*', 'Thangka Painting: An object of art or Ritual Observation?' and 'Temple *Utsavam* – Praxis and Proscenium of Aesthetic Traditions in Southern India'.

The success of the hybrid format of lectures this year has encouraged us, and in the coming academic year we will continue to engage with a national and international cohort of students rather than one restricted to the city of Mumbai alone. ***– J.K.***

PAST PROGRAMMES

Brown Britain: 'Indian' Art, Imperial Encounters & Diasporic Dreaming

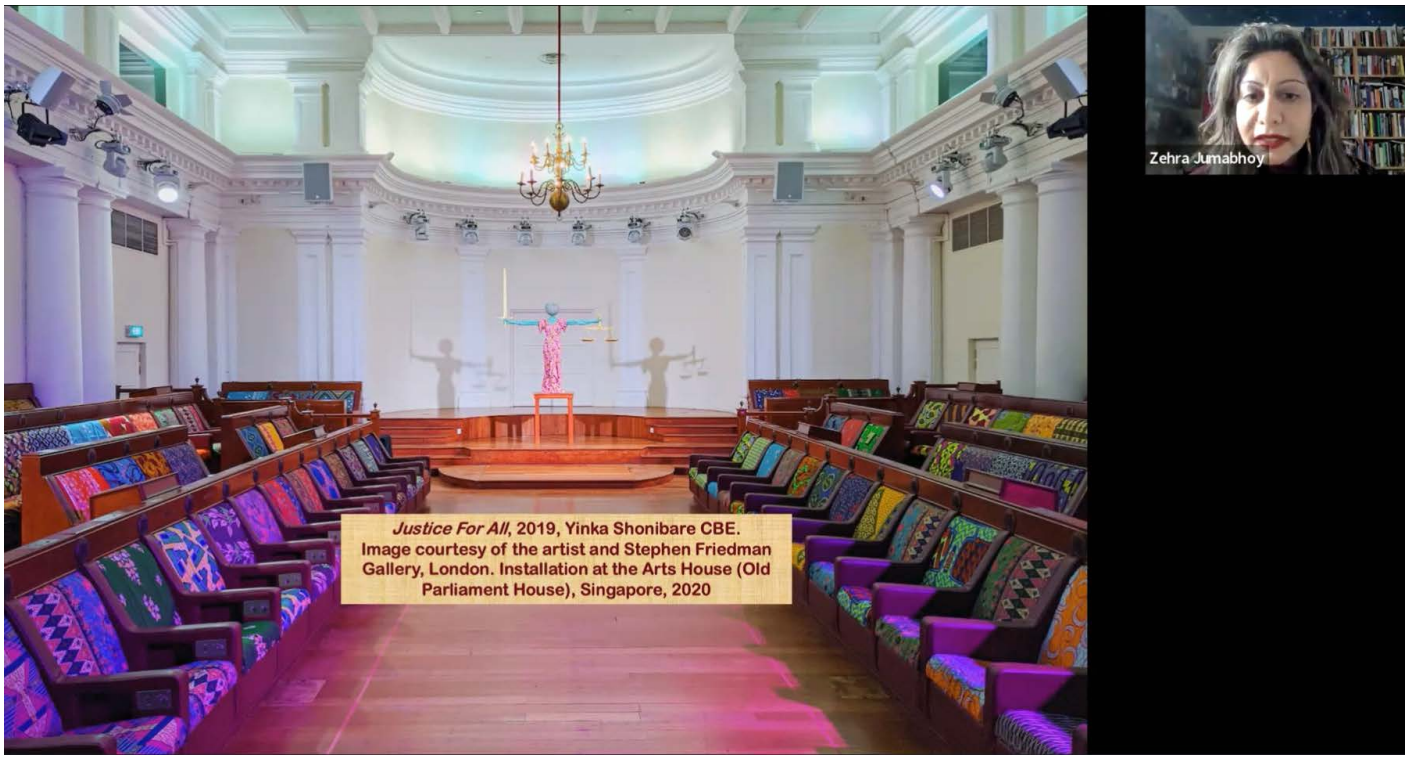
April 22nd, 2023, 5:00 - 6:15 PM IST | Prof. Zehra Jumabhoy (Lecturer in the History of Art at the University of Bristol, UK)

Online Public Lecture | Platform: Zoom

Dr. Zehra Jumabhoy situated diasporic art in Britain at the centre of the dialogue between the imperial past and the postcolonial present: amnesia regarding the colonial past is impossible to sustain in a study of diasporic art or in politics. The investigative talk presented a convincing argument regarding the importance of the study of such art. The speaker's curatorial projects became the scaffold on which she strung her ideas about the notions of Britishness and of nation, of diaspora and of displacement. While some Indians may now prefer to ignore the imperial past despite its undeniable importance, this past overtly or subliminally haunts dialogues in Britain.

The speaker began by displaying a 2018 artwork titled '*Rule Britannia*' by the Singh twins, commissioned by curator Emily Hannam for an exhibition titled '*Eastern Encounters*' for the Royal Collection Trust at the Queen's Gallery. The work is a lightbox that uses an enlarged version of a format seen in the paintings of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan's *Padshahnama* manuscript, which is currently part of the Windsor collection, and often referred to as the Queen's *Padshahnama*, subversively denoting British power. The manuscript was also shown at the exhibition in question. In the work, the British queen or British royalty occupy the *jharokha* windows in which Shah Jahan is pictured in the *Padshahnama*. In one part of the work, the figure of Britannia kills a tiger, usually a cipher for India. This section of the work echoes the famous *Retribution*¸ painted by Edward Armitage in 1858 in the wake of the so-called Sepoy Mutiny, now referred to as the First War of Independence in India. In another part of the work, Britannia sits on a lion, signalling her powerful reign. A ship signals migration and maritime power while a British flag with the word 'talent' emblazoned across it is emblematic of British identity.

Yinka Shonibare's work, *Justice for All* (2019), was presented at the Old Parliament House of Singapore (where the country's independence



was negotiated) in an exhibition guest-curated by the speaker for the Asian Art Institutum in 2020. Here, the artist installed a figure of Lady Justice (mimicking the figure in the Old Bailey, the Royal Courts of Justice in London) holding a sword in one hand and carrying a traditional beam balance scale in the other. The figure was clad partially in Vlisco, a Dutch wax fabric often used by Shonibare, which was employed in African independence movements as an authentic symbol of African identity. However, it is a fabric inspired by Javanese batik, initially made by the Dutch at the time of the Dutch East India Company. The Dutch hoped to sell this fabric to the Javanese, but it was rejected by them. It is, therefore, not an authentic marker of African identity even though it was eventually sold in the Dutch African colonies. Lady Justice's arms were covered in fabric with the diagonal pattern seen at the Javanese court. Vlisco and batik fabrics also covered the seats in the Old Parliament House. Here, ideas of diaspora, blackness and Asianness were resituated within a colonial context in a disruptive act. Nevertheless, the colonial past continues to live on in the former colonies; here is a complicated space which views its British colonial heritage with pride, with Stamford Raffles identified as a founder of Singapore.

Dr. Jumabhoy's projects with Katy Freer at the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, a museum at Swansea, Wales, are related to another complex space. The exhibition *(Post) Colonial Conversations between India and Wales* emerged as part of the Imperial Subjects Project. This endeavour began as a series of seminars which used the travel diaries of Richard Glynn Vivian, scion of the family that founded the museum. The seminars and exhibition revealed an oft-ignored fact: despite being seen as the power that created a monolithic, unitarian empire, British identity is itself multifarious. Ireland, Scotland, and certainly Wales have identified themselves at various times as England's 'colonies', raising the question of whether the British 'subjects' in these places were less culpable than the English in the imperial project. Many of the dialogues that took place early in India's independence movement seem somehow mirrored in the struggle of these British regions as they strive for autonomous identities. Yet, it is impossible to ignore that Wales is the site of Powis Castle, used by Robert Clive (also known as Clive of India) to buy his way into aristocracy. It houses the huge collection of precious Indian objects and artworks amassed by him. His daughter-in-law, Henrietta Herbert (married to Clive's son Edward) bought more treasures from a position of power after the defeat of Tipu Sultan in the third Anglo-Mysore war, a battle in which her husband was involved. An image of Robert Clive can be seen in *Rule Britannia* by the Singh twins. Contentious questions regarding the restitution and the sale of the objects in Powis Castle (which are seen as 'belonging' to British history) are rife in the present time.

Dr. Jumabhoy has mapped the connections between art and industry, both in Britain and in India, in a collaborative effort between the Science Gallery, Bengaluru and the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery. The speaker drew parallels between the effects of the textile strikes in Mumbai and the shutting of Welsh coal mines by Margaret Thatcher. Both events occurred in the 1980s and brought about the death of industry in these locations. This was an economic blow from which Wales could not recover. In a turning of tables, the steelworks at Port Talbot owned by Tata Steel is the industry that now dominates Wales. Local people constantly fear a shutdown of the factory by its owners as it would create great economic hardships for Wales. The imperial past and its material fallout remains relevant in such examples as well as others such as the controversial question of the rightful ownership of the Crown Jewels and the continuing legacy of Partition in the Indian subcontinent.

The speaker went on to discuss her engagement with the work of Raqib Shaw in which cultural references are deeply embedded. Drawing on paintings which will be part of an exhibition titled '*Ballads of East and West: Raqib Shaw's American Journey*' curated by her, she first analysed *The Adoration (after Jan Gossaert)*, 2015-16. The artist references Renaissance art in many works including this painting which presents Shaw himself as the Virgin Mary holding his dog Musashi (named after a legendary Japanese swordsman) rather than the Christ child. Richly garbed wolf-faced men offer tempting gifts such as a Mughal water sprinkler to the Raqib figure. Rotting fruit and skeletons lie in the foreground indicating that the work is also a vanitas painting. Parakeets such as those kept by the artist's family in Kashmir when he was a child abound in the

Raqib Shaw, Self-Portrait in the Study at Peckham, after Vincenzo Catena (Kashmir version), 2015. Acrylic and enamel on birchwood © Raqib Shaw. Photo © Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd. Courtesy White Cube. The work will be included in "Raqib Shaw: Ballads of East and West", a major exhibition which will travel to four US institutions, organised by the Frist Art Museum (Nashville) and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (Boston)

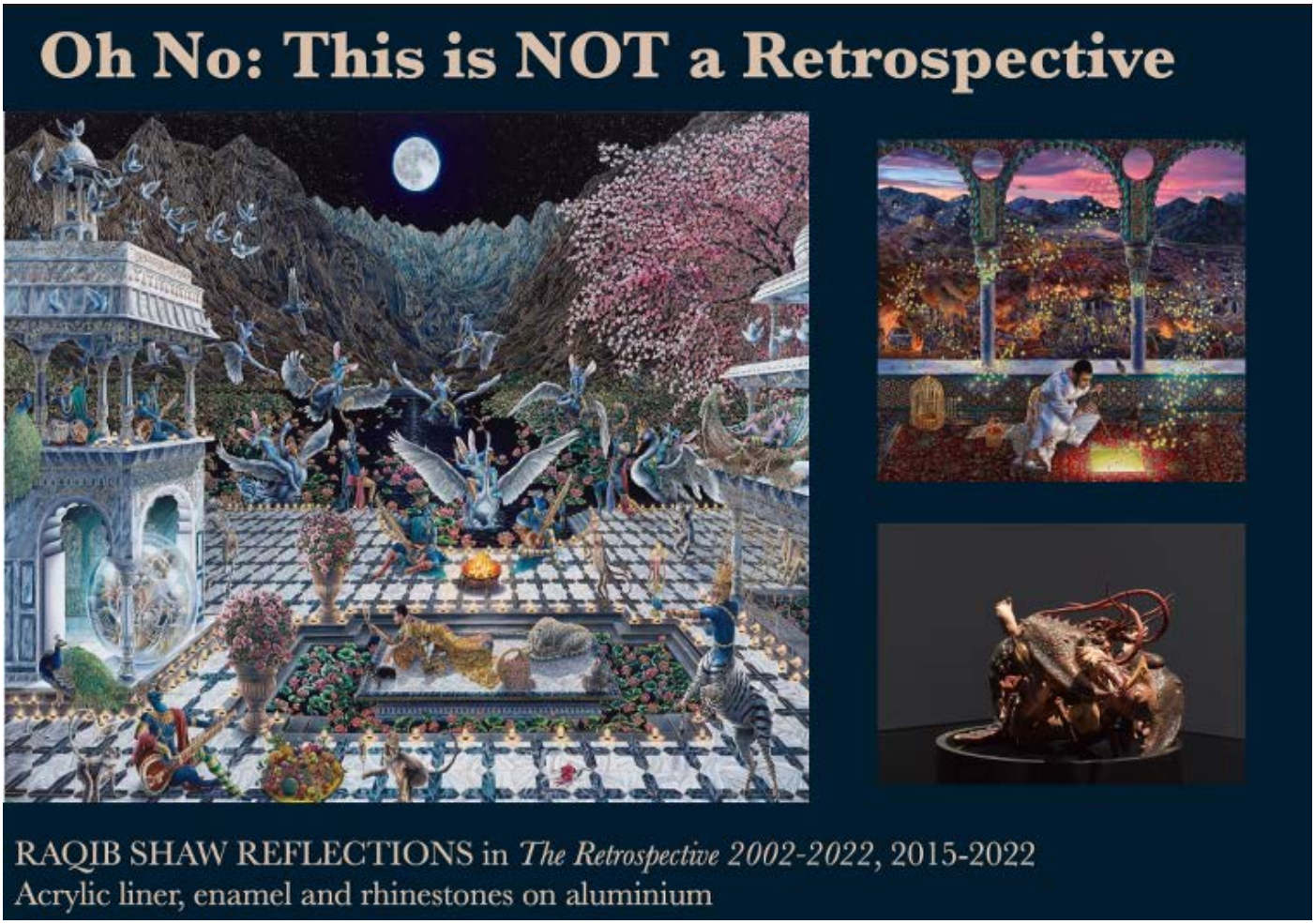
painting. In the background is the Kashmiri Hari Prabhat fort, marking the reality of displacement and the loss of the artist's childhood world. According to the artist, the painting can be seen as reflecting his own relationship with the British art world (members of which he has termed 'nasties'), presenting here a seduction into the upper echelons of this world by the wolf-men, while he refuses to be bribed.

The speaker showed how Raqib Shaw's paintings negotiate between East and West. They also negotiate the idea of the diaspora and its continued relevance to present-day dialogues, however fraught, about national identity. The fallout of Partition and the Radcliffe Line is still felt in the subcontinent and is apparent in the loss of the syncretic identity that once existed in Kashmir. In *Self-Portrait in the Study at Peckham (After Vincenzo Catena) Kashmir Version*, 2015-16, the figure of the artist takes the place of Saint Jerome in the original by Vincenzo Catena. Saint Jerome, known for his austerity and chastity, was a great translator and a bridge between East and West. This may be the reason why the artist identifies with him and uses this painting to 'translate' his ideas about his own diasporic identity into image. The figure of Raqib in the painting is oblivious to his luxurious surroundings, where mice gorge on rich foods and fruit in the foreground. In the background are the artist's own works, including one that depicts the Dal Lake of Kashmir and the Himalayas, while another is titled *The Mild-Eyed Melancholy of the Lotos Eaters*, in a clear reference to a poem by Tennyson. Raqib Shaw's studio is in Peckham. In the painting, the artist's belongings, such as a carpet, are seen in his studio, and window-like openings reveal a view of a Sufi shrine in flames. Many worlds are seen in these frames within the larger frame of the Catena painting – for instance the world of Kashmir and the world of painting and the studio – creating a slippage between reality, fantasy and a diasporic dream.

In *Last Rites of the Artist's Ego at Shankaracharya Temple (After Ludovico Mazzolino)* one Raqib figure reads the last rites to another Raqib figure that lies in a coffin. In the background stands the Shankaracharya temple of an earlier, syncretic

Kashmir. This syncretic legacy is reflected in the fact that the artist studied in a Christian school when he was a child in Kashmir. It is also present in his Sufi leanings as well as in the recreated yet imagined Kashmiri paradise with four gardens in his studio. It is most poignantly seen in his works, where memory and the fairyland of his studio intermesh. The works disrupt linear time: the past is present in the artist's studio and his work, but is increasingly distant; "another country".

While the exhibition is not technically a retrospective, a painting called '*The Retrospective 2002-2022*', painted between 2015-2022 is filled with images of the artist's own works and is possibly a view of his studio. Many of the works to be exhibited in *Ballads of East and West* are present in this painting. At the centre stands the artist against a backdrop of the Himalayas. The title of the exhibition is drawn by the artist from the last stanza of Rudyard Kipling's eponymous ballad which is usually seen as declaring that "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet". In actuality, the ballad proposes the opposite through the subsequent lines of the stanza. Like the ballad, Raqib Shaw's hybrid work, and its trajectory as it becomes part of a travelling show which will visit four museums in the USA, emerges from the interstices of cultural interaction. Several paintings in this exhibition present works within works, not only setting up a dialogue with art history but also problematising the placement of Raqib Shaw within this art history due to the many identities afforded by his diasporic persona which he self-consciously and self-reflexively foregrounds. The speaker was able to successfully demonstrate that each diasporic artwork in Raqib Shaw's oeuvre and in that of other such artists yields references to myriad other works and histories and that such art is relevant in the present time. **– *J.K.***



CRITICISM & THEORY

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

JPM's Criticism & Theory offerings include: (1) a Certificate course in Aesthetics, Criticism & 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 workshops in these fields.

Aesthetics, Criticism & Theory

PAST PROGRAMMES

Comparative Classics: On Greek and Indian Epic Poetry

April 4th, 2023, 6:30 - 8:30 PM IST | Phiroze Vasunia (Professor of Greek at University College London)

Platform: Physical with Live Streaming on Zoom

Prof. Phiroze Vasunia speaks during Comparative Classics: On Greek and Indian Epic Poetry

As principal conveyor of the research project entitled **Comparative Classics: Greece, Rome, and India**, whose main idea is to investigate the classical ideal as it comes to be canonised across this triad of (ancient) civilisations, Dr. Vasunia, who drew his talk from the said project, shed the strong light of comparative criticism on Greek and Sanskrit epic poetry. The representative texts were mainly the *Iliad* and the *Ramayana*, followed by a close reading of a passage from the *Odyssey*.

Where does poetry come from? What is poetry for?

These were some of the orienting questions that helped the speaker start off his search for a more refined understanding of the vexed relations between poetry and emotion. As highlighted in his programme note, both the Greek and Sanskrit traditions emphasise the centrality of pain for poetic inspiration and composition. Hence, the question Dr. Vasunia's paper relentlessly orbited was: *why does verse have to come from suffering*?

The speaker began by observing the absolutely crucial role played by the mediating consciousness of the poet as a bridge uniting the spheres of poetry and emotion, something that is hinted at in the opening lines/verses of the *Iliad* and the *Ramayana*, where both Homer and Valmiki find themselves turned into receptacles for the Muse's and Brahma's will respectively.

To uncover "the emotional notes struck by the epics", Dr. Vasunia plunged into a close reading of the *Iliad*'s first line which begins with the Greek word for 'anger' followed by the word 'sing'. Here, Homer is requesting the Muse to sing *through him* of the anger felt by Achilles and its devastating consequences on the Greeks and the Trojans alike. Localising anger in the epic hero at the very start, according to the speaker, may be Homer's way of alerting his audience to the central role played by this emotion that will contaminate the epic in the pages to come. When we consider how the book closes with "the moving spectacle" of Hector's funeral, granted by an Achilles who allows Priam's request for the same, we learn how it was "Homer's genius" to have alchemised Achilles' anger into the pity of a tragic hero with the help of "a narrative arc that encompasses the entire poem".

Speculating further on the interstices of anger and poetry in the *Iliad*, the speaker offered four possibilities:

1. To invoke audience awareness towards the *poet's awareness* of how anger and pity are the primary emotions his story will evoke in them.
2. Apropos of Aristotle who says that defining the limits of an emotion as complex as anger isn't easy, the *Iliad* as Homer's experimental exploration of the ethical, affective and social paradigms of anger.

3. Achilles' anger as mirroring Homer's own negative feelings towards his society.
4. Cloaking Achilles in righteous indignation against Agamemnon may be Homer's way of fuelling public emotion against political injustice and the tyranny of war (since poems in the ancient world were not read in private but sung at social gatherings).

The discussion was then directed towards the opening of the *Ramayana* where we see a similar transformation of anger into something resembling art; an act that implicitly places the two traditions in dialogue.

Prof. Phiroze Vasunia speaks during 'Comparative Classics: On Greek and Indian Epic Poetry'

In the *Ramayana's* "primal scene", we have Valmiki observing two love birds when the male is shot dead by a hunter. "Stricken with grief", Valmiki becomes so enraged that he curses the hunter: "...you shall not live for very long." No sooner has he uttered this than he feels profound remorse, and it is this remorse that has him mysteriously declare: "...the utterance that I produced in this excess of *soka*, grief, shall be called *sloka*, poetry, and nothing else". (trans. Robert P. Goldman)

According to the speaker, in Valmiki's turning of what was originally intended to be a curse into a verse "fixed in metrical quarters" and "fit for the accompaniment of stringed and percussion instruments", we find the "embryonic version" of the central theory of Indian aesthetics, i.e., the *rasa* theory. To illustrate, Sheldon Pollock was quoted: "The anecdote serves not only as the first acknowledgment that a specific *bhava* of literature lies in the expression of emotion which is shown in how the phonemic correspondence maps an ontological one (*shoka/shloka*), but also shows that the expression of the poet's own emotion constitutes the said *bhava*."

Pollock is here walking down the path of Anandavardhana (mid-ninth century) and Abhinavagupta (mid-tenth century), his disciple, both of whom concurred that it was "Valmiki's own grief that we confront in the opening stanzas", and that "grief (*shoka*) is the basic emotion for the flavour (*rasa*) known as compassion (*karuna*)". However, Abhinavagupta qualified this view by maintaining that the aesthetic emotion or *karuna rasa* (felt by the reader) is different from the actual grief initially experienced by the poet.

Bound up with these concerns is "the other dimension of the poetic as the performative" which lends the *Ramayana* an air of "preternatural lucidity and self-awareness". Comparing the curse that "Valmiki not only pronounces but also performs" with the whole narrative as "a composition in verse and performance", we can see how, employing prolepsis, the poem illustrates great self-knowledge via "the mechanisms of imitation, repetition, memorisation and oral transmission" that enable it to predict and participate in its own reception by posterity. It is these processes that have proved "crucial to the epic's survival and success in India and beyond". Alongside this, we have at least seven terms used by both the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* (that employs three more) *to refer to themselves* as literary entities.

The critical lens was then turned to Dr. Bihani Sarkar's book, *Classical Sanskrit Tragedy* (2021), where she offers the view that Valmiki's grief for the dead bird may be the return of a repressed grief whose refreshed "recognition is transformed into a process of mental relishing (*rasa*) freed of the constraints of time and space and also of one's ego"; it is "a generalised form of awareness finding itself shaped in the words of the curse".

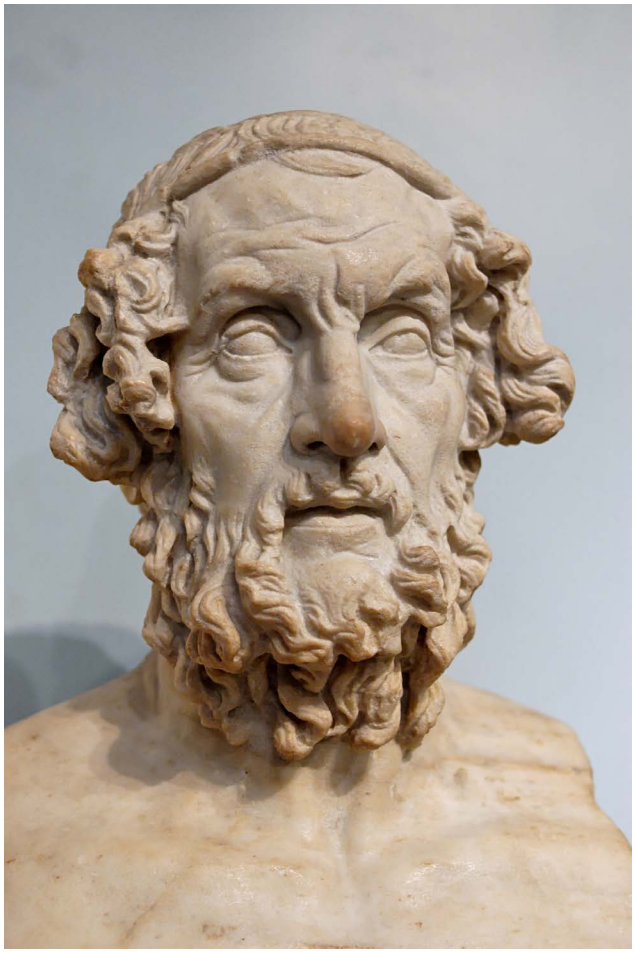
Developing this theme further, Dr. Vasunia discussed Simona Sawhney's book, *Modernity of Sanskrit* (2008), in which she speculates that Valmiki "figures as the double of both the bird and the hunter". To show his similarity with the hunter, Sawhney points to Valmiki's maliciousness as revealed in his mindless act of cursing. Hers is a Valmiki who is aware of the real (politick) nature of the story he is tasked with narrating, and one

who allows "his feelings of pity, compassion and outraged justice" to be counterbalanced by "ideas of revenge and violence". Thus, the very opening scene of India's *adi kavya* (first poem) can be seen as an "incipient celebration of war".

Reflecting on the *shoka/shloka* miracle, Sawhney offers the following explanation: "Poetry emerges when a scene of wild identification is safely channelled into a form of language that will henceforth be chiefly distinguished by its rhythmic repeatability." Veering away from such a language-oriented view, Dr. Vasunia chose, instead, to trust the authenticity of guilt engendered within the poet, and which, he felt, was the catalyst that transformed his anger and remorse into *karuna bhava*, invoking *karuna rasa* in the prospective reader. He believed that neglecting the affective in favour of the aesthetic is to overlook that "all language has the potential to do harm", even one couched in the aesthetically pleasing narrative of the epic. On the other hand, if we think of the epic's opening verses as "a moral parable about the human condition and about the power of words", our view of Valmiki as "mature, merciful and compassionate" will be "upheld", turning this scene (and the whole epic) into a subtle but strong critique of the war it is forced to narrate. Thus, whereas Valmiki writes about war, the redemption provided by *shloka* is that the *shoka* caused by it will be contained within the self-imposed limits of a verse that is "delighting [to] the heart".

At this point, the speaker segued into the *Odyssey* which is yet another self-conscious epic "filled with singers, storytellers, narrators, and other voices" that "tell, re-tell, supplement, and offer different perspectives" (on the narrative).

The moment chosen for dissection was from *Book VIII* when Homer has Odysseus listen to a blind bard singing of Odysseus' exploits in the Trojan War. Three songs, of which the last is requested by the hero himself, and Odysseus is "weeping the way a wife mourns for her lord". Reflectively, the speaker suggested that this was Homer allowing Odysseus to emotionally identify with not only his lonely wife but also with thousands of Trojan women widowed and enslaved after the war. Much like in the *Ramayana*, it is the epic narrative that enables Homer by way of a "reverse simile", to have his hero psychically exchange places with the "Other" (the female sex) just as Valmiki (self-reflexively) does with the bird/hunter.



Bust of Homer in the British Museum

In conclusion, the speaker reinstated the aim of his paper: the contemplation of the affective and the aesthetic object as they meet in the "contact zone" constituted by the reader. Confessing the question of "why is poetry rooted in pain" to probably be a partial one, Dr. Vasunia nonetheless succeeded in showing how three world epics seem to suggest that "poetry is born out of trauma", and that it falls on the poet "to bear witness and seek to offer redress". ***– N.S.***

Freud's Antiquity: Object, Idea, Desire

April 4th, 2023, 6:30 - 8:30 PM IST | Miriam Leonard (Professor of Greek Literature and its Reception at University College London)

Platform: Physical with Live Streaming on Zoom

Sigmund Freud, Antiquarian

While Freudian terms and theories have become a regular favourite when quoting pop-psychology, the 'founder of psychoanalysis' drew inspiration to develop concepts and methods of this field of inquiry through a more unlikely source. Freud was an avid collector of artefacts from or inspired by the ancient world. Over 2,500 antiquities amassed by Freud during his lifetime are preserved in his study at his final home in Hampstead, London. Each one of these antiquities motivated and shaped ideas to explore and reveal unconscious and conscious thoughts. The exhibition *'Freud's Antiquity: Object, Idea, Desire* co-curated by Prof. Miriam Leonard (University College London), Prof. Daniel Orrells (Kings College London), and Prof. Richard Armstrong (University of Houston) at the Freud Museum London, explored Freud's obsession with archaeology, especially 19th-century archaeology and how he began to "... understand the mind as an archaeological site which the psychoanalyst could excavate to uncover lost memories". Moreover, he often used objects from his collection to "explain his theories of the mind to his patients". In like manner, Prof. Leonard presented this talk by showcasing select objects from Freud's study to explain the evolution of the man, his ideas of psychoanalysis and his tryst with the past – both at an individuated and collective level.

However, the first object discussed from Freud's consulting room in Vienna wasn't even an 'ancient relic'. In fact, hanging over his couch was a scaled down, colourless, contemporary reproduction of an 1808-Jean Auguste Dominique painting depicting a scene in the story of Oedipus – a term ubiquitous in Freudian speak. This particular representation of Oedipus with the Sphinx, however, was not one on which Freud's theory of psychosexual development pivoted, but rather reflected another facet of the Freudian attitude – a celebration of rationality. In this distinctively neo-classical image, Oedipus uses his famed superior intellect and cognitive powers to answer the Sphinx's riddle. Freud too saw himself as seeking, through his psychoanalysis, an answer to the riddle of humanity and the unconscious. To Freud, Oedipus was also the embodiment of traditional science and a new science marked by self-examination – a classical figure that had Freud reaching for a classical ideal.

Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *Oedipus and the Sphinx* (1807)

Psychoanalysis and the Archaeological Metaphor

Freud would preoccupy himself with the status of antiquity as an ideal. In 1904, he had the fortune of making the Hellenic pilgrimage when, by happenstance, he visited the Acropolis in Athens. Here, Freud records an instant throwback to childhood where he was confronted with the Hellenistic underpinnings of his education. An ideal, as he understood, that failed to penetrate into his unconscious as a sense of derealisation descended when he bore witness to something that was hitherto abstract. He later rejected this notion, and claimed that as a boy he never doubted the existence of Athens but the feeling of disbelief lay in the question if he'd ever visit it in person. A wanderlust shackled by poverty, Freud's longing to travel was a need to escape that was rooted in a dissatisfaction with home and family. His journey to the Acropolis symbolised the essence of success, that is to say, to have got further than or excelled one's father – an act

Prof. Miriam Leonard speaks during 'Freud's Antiquity: Object, Idea, Desire'

forbidden. This Oedipal encounter was brought back into the cultural context as to Freud, Athens and the Acropolis itself contained evidence of the son's superiority. Freud's Hebraic father, being in business and lacking secondary education, held little importance for the Hellenistic Athens, and Freud's enjoyment of his journey to Athens was therefore tainted by a sense of piety.

In Freud's journey from Oedipus and the Acropolis, a reflection of his changing characterisation of psychoanalysis from what he originally called the cathartic method to one structured around the archaeological metaphor marked a shift from a textual model to one based on material culture. When, however, the archaeological metaphor worked conversely as an analogy for mental process, Freud would retreat into a positivistic notion of science by resorting to analogy entrenched in biology. The archaeological metaphor in Freud's psychoanalysis was thus not a guarantee of uncovering the unconscious, but called into question the boundaries that separate the past and the present.

Lost Language and the Interpretation of Dreams

A huge part of Freud's collection has a noticeable Greek or Egyptian provenance, though a few objects were from Mesopotamia, India, and China. A few Aztec and Incan artefacts also make up the collection. However, it is a seemingly inconspicuous jug of Etruscan origin that Freud found fascinating. Unlike the discernible Ancient Greek or Egyptian Hieroglyphics, the language of the Etruscans was more deeply steeped in ambiguity. This jug belonged to and was used by a culture that once existed but was now devoid of language and surrounded by silence. In this regard, rather than being deterred by a sense of ambiguity, Freud sought to recover the lost language of dreams whose implicit meaning he endorsed. His work *Interpretation of Dreams* proved a pivotal moment in psychoanalysis.

Scholars in the field tend to use archaeological findings to bolster an existing notion of an ideal. By contrast, when confronted with the Acropolis at Athens, Freud calls into question the investment in that ideal. Freud's appeal to archaeology can be regarded as an effort to ingratiate psychoanalysis with society and gain an influential place in it. Psychoanalysis would gain both popular appeal and scientific respectability from this association. ***– A.B.***

Creative Processes

PAST PROGRAMMES

Sharjah Biennial 15: "Thinking Historically in the Present":
India at the Sharjah Biennial - Situating 12 Participating Artists

April 27th, 2023, Tea: 6:00 PM | Lecture - 6:30 - 8:30 PM IST | Physical, Only at Jnanapravaha Mumbai

'Thinking Historically in the Present', the recently concluded 15th edition of the Sharjah Biennial, featured around 300 works from more than 150 artists and collectives spread across numerous sites in the Emirate of Sharjah. The biennial was director Hoor Al Qasimi's homage to the late and well-loved curator Okwui Enwezor. In her catalogue essay, Al Qasimi reflects on Enwezor's ground-breaking decolonial legacy, as "a lodestar in my curatorial consciousness". Validating artists outside the otherwise Eurocentric canon's narrow purview, his work had offered her a glimpse into a wider world of possibilities, initiating important dialogues on decolonising art institutions and their general discourse. Enwezor's example became a formative influence on the institutional trajectory that she mapped out for the biennial. Tragically, halfway through planning the biennial, Enwezor was pronounced with cancer and while battling for his life, was also handing over the keys with a vault full of ideas back to the one who had selected him – Al Qasimi.

This edition of the biennial thereby became a transnational nexus of global civic imaginaries as well as an important decolonial locus of enunciation for artists – especially that of the global south. In April, Jnanapravaha in collaboration with Chemould Prescott Road, presented a lecture on 'India at the Sharjah Biennial' with gallerist Shireen Gandhy giving an introduction on the premise of the biennial along with a presentation on the 12 participating Indian artists, 8 of whom were from her gallery's roster and 3 of whom were present to share their work.

I was fortunate enough to visit the biennial with Shireen and relive all that she spoke about during her presentation. Spread over the length and breadth of the Emirate of Sharjah, spanning over five main areas, the venues included the polished galleries of the capital city, peeling classrooms of a disused kindergarten along the coast, a medical clinic, a vegetable market, and even an ice factory. We had to traverse west through deserts, and east through mountainous terrains. The challenge of reaching all locations was enormous, but once one navigated their way to them, what Al Qasimi did was open doors to the possibility of having spaces that were so unlikely that the biennial

really transported one into extremely unexpected avenues of viewing art. Al Qasimi's idea was to position the international art industry as a centre of knowledge production and an engine of civic inclusion – to bring the biennial into conversation with places where art never goes and to local inhabitants omitted by the programming of the contemporary art world.

Shireen went on to present the work of the artists by recounting our memories of visiting the locations of the exhibits. Al Mugheirah Square held Vivan Sundaram's works; he was one of 30 artists specially commissioned to make new work to mark the biennial's 30th anniversary edition. He presented a photo-based project titled *'Six Stations of a Life Pursued'*, signifying a journey with periodic halts that release pain, regain trust, behold beauty, recall horror and discard memory. Sharjah Art Museum had Varunika Saraf's *We, The People* series of 76 hand-embroidered Indian map works attempting to chart an alternative timeline of the nation by drawing from our archives. The Museum also held two iterations of Nilima Sheikh's works. The first made during Documenta 14 called '*Terrain: Carrying Across, Leaving Behind'*, made of 16 panels inscribing stories she had dialogued with in her practice through song, poetry and visuals, and also *Trails*, a more recent work commissioned by the biennial in which she depicted an itinerant community's seasonal migration. Richard Bartholomew and Pablo Bartholomew looked at Indian society through the unique lens of a father and a son, reflecting on different life paths, but united in the common quest for identity through – self-portraits, family and friends' portraits, and familiar spaces of their homes and the outer world. Calligraphy Square held the works of textile and craft researcher Nelly Sethna who applied her skills as a weaver to create new visual languages departing from the nationalist aesthetics expected of artists in post-independent India, as well as Mithu Sen's work made with real and fake hair. The hair forms a poem in an imaginary Arabic script purposely rendered illegible to poke fun at the distinctions between the high art of calligraphic script and mass produced, digitally mediated popular art. Al Hamriyah Studios held Archana Hande's work, *Weaving Light*, a piece that examined transformations of labour, materiality and technology in the context of Bangalore's textile industry. A room was also dedicated to Lavanya Mani's intricate tapestries that spoke of the exoticism that was marvelled at by the western traveller and the impacts of cross-territorial exchange on our landscapes. Amar Kanwar's film installation was located in a small shack at the Old Al Dhaid medical clinic – perhaps the most intriguing location – in which he weaved together a constellation of images and stories on separate channels, inviting viewers to reconfigure their search for ways of resistance, reconciliation, and politics of the quotidian.

Shireen's presentation was followed by a presentation by Anju Dodiya, on her series of 'mattress paintings', *Bridge of Hesitation*, at the biennial. The works were an ode to nature, pointing to the ambivalences of our present moment, suggesting both an uneasiness about the state of the contemporary world as well as a baseline faith in the congenial nature of humanity. Prajakta Potnis's site-specific multimedia installation, *Cracks in the Master's House*, that unfolded across four interconnected spaces, explored the life of domestic-care workers in India, amplifying the stories of women whose labour is extracted only for them to be obscured behind the banality of the everyday. Concluding the lecture, Reena Saini Kallat spoke of her works, *Chorus I-III*, displayed at an old bank building, which were sculptures modelled after pre-radar devices employed as early warning systems during World War II to detect the engine sounds of enemy aircraft. The artist replaced the war soundscape with the song of the 'national' birds of neighbouring nation-states with hostile, turbulent histories. ***– A.P.***

Curatorial Processes

PAST PROGRAMMES

In the Mood: Exhibiting Udaipur's Paintings of Place

May 1st, 2023, 6:30 - 8:30 PM IST | Dr. Debra Diamond (Curator for South & Southeast Asian Art at the Freer Gallery of Art & the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, The Smithsonian's National Museum) and Dr. Dipti Khera (Associate Professor in the Department of Art History and the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University)

Online Lecture | Platform: Zoom

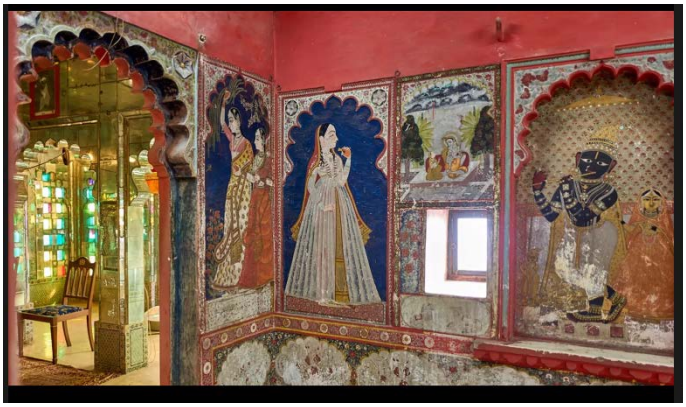
Curators Debra Diamond and Dipti Khera generously shared with Jnanapravaha's audience the methodological, historiographical and exhibitionary rationale of *A Splendid Land: Paintings from Royal Udaipur*, recently held at the National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. The exhibition broke new ground through curatorial choices that proposed new ways to view early modern court painting (1700–1900 CE) at Udaipur. It also acknowledged the work and insights of conservators at the City Palace Museum, Udaipur, as well as collaborations between curation and academia, centring on the curators' students in the USA.

A few 17th-century paintings evocative of moods such as those found in sacred *Ramayana* manuscripts, *Ragamala* manuscripts and poetic works such as the *Rasikapriya* displayed the small format that was the norm until around 1700 when larger, immersive paintings that were the focus of the exhibition came to be commissioned. While the earlier paintings were generally religious or presented royal figures, the new works depicted the experience of the artists' own place, the city of Udaipur, the moods and emotions (*bhava*) of its palaces, temples, lakes, and surrounding landscape, and the lived experience of its people, royal and ordinary.

Colonial commentators such as James Tod mistakenly but characteristically perceived these works with an Orientalist bias as royal 'portraits' of the indolent, pleasure-loving kings of an exotic land with a glorious past but now in steep decline, aligning with the picturesque aesthetics seen in the 18th-century views of architectural ruins. This view completely ignored the fact that in these paintings, the figures, including that of the king, were embedded in far larger spaces, such as built architecture or in natural surroundings in which human intervention had often made valuable additions. The scholars noted the specific political and regional contexts in which the pleasurable

pursuits of the Udaipur kings and others depicted in the works emerged; these paintings show the moods and politics of pleasure that enabled kings to cultivate or affirm new social and political alliances and relationships at a time when Mughal authority was weakening, and when the grounds for loyalties, personal friendships and allegiances as well as representation had shifted substantially. At this time, it became imperative to create bonds through the depictions of a praiseworthy land; the paintings celebrated place and inspired pride. Courts in North India reimagined their realms through architecture and art in the wake of Mughal decline. A painting of Maharana Amar Singh and his courtiers playing Holi, for instance, established the powerful inner core of sixteen noble houses in Udaipur, entwining these political relationships with the joyous, colourful *bhava* of the festival celebrated in a lush palace garden, and creating a productive bricolage of political power, place, and pleasure. The names of the *thakurs* or courtiers are recorded formally in the painting's inscription. Unable to change the misleading art historical titles of all the paintings to put forward their own view of the works' true subject matter, the curators used additional label titles in the galleries; this Holi painting was captioned *'Power Play'*.

These large, sumptuous paintings on paper and cloth, many of which are today in the City Palace Museum of Udaipur, began to be painted one and a half centuries after the establishment of Udaipur, and celebrate the beneficence of the Sisodia dynasty. The works celebrate the city, its environs and water resources, and communicate emotions and incidents through unique pictorial and visual strategies. For instance, a painting of the locale of Nahar Magara depicts day on the right, when Raja Sawai Jai Singh arrived at Maharana Sangram Singh's encampment, and night on the left, when both went to Raja Jai Singh's tent where



a royal assembly was conducted by torchlight and they played Holi. To highlight this, each gallery in the exhibition was devoted to the mood or the memory of a particular place. Viewers of the exhibition were able to sensorially apprehend this world and experience the enchantment of the city of Udaipur and the Aravalli hills through the richness, scale, and extraordinary detail of the paintings, and through special curatorial strategies, as places of memory and joy. The moods stirred by the city were sensorially recreated through different ambient soundscapes in each gallery. These soundscapes based on elements in the paintings (such as crashing thunder, splashing fish, the rhythmic swish of a water wheel, and falling rain) were prepared by exceptional filmmaker Amit Dutta, allowing viewers to feel and imagine themselves in 18th-century Udaipur, and nudging them to look more closely for aural motifs in the paintings. Each gallery was also painted in an atmospheric colour to heighten the sensorial experience of viewers.

To decode these works, the speakers recounted that the city of the rising sun, Udaipur (Sanskrit *uday*: rising, *pur*: city) was founded in 1553 by Rana Udai Singh after the sack of the former capital of the region, Chittorgarh. Hemmed by the Aravalli hills, the site was selected for security and sustainability, both made possible by its topography. Small lakes were sometimes expanded as was Lake Pichola at the centre of Udaipur, seen in the exceptionally large and detailed, gold embellished and gorgeously realised work, *Sunrise in Udaipur* (1722–23), where the artist uses keen observation to depict not only the enchanting and sustaining city and its architecture beneath swirling blue, red, and gold clouds, but also its surroundings, and people engaged in their daily tasks. The painting also records the history of cattle rearing in the region, and features a water wheel, dams, embankments, wells, and sluices. The topography of the area allowed human intervention and rain harvesting which eventually created a beautiful, bountiful city full of well-used man-made lakes in a semi-arid zone which metamorphosed into a thriving agricultural region. The king and the patron of the painting, Maharana Sangram Singh II, appears twice, but is not the central focus of the painting. The painting's subject is its mood or *bhava* which conveys the ambience of a place and time, making it memorable.

The moving quality of artworks prompted Indian aesthetic theory to examine the *bhava* or affective states that art aroused. In the Sanskritic tradition, this inquiry culminated in the notion of *rasa*, literally 'juice'. Emotional resonance, it was agreed by the year 1000 CE, centres on the discerning viewer's experience rather than the artwork itself: feeling *bhava* led to the ultimate aesthetic experience or tasting of *rasa*, "a blissful immersion in the core essence of the artwork". By the 16th century, poets writing in the more accessible Brajbhasha expanded the Sanskrit tradition's typologies. In collective settings, connoisseurs in Udaipur learnt the subtleties of these new *bhavas* through poetic handbooks like Keshavdas's *Rasikapriya*, which used the ideal love between Radha and Krishna to create *rasa*. In much the same way, Udaipur's painters in the 18th century created new *bhavas* as they depicted these very connoisseurs. Patrons cherished *bhavas* such as pride in Mewar's abundance and seasons, and the pleasures of recalling their own activities in the lake city. Across regions and languages, there flourished a courtly tradition of literary praise of place; the large paintings of the period echo this trend. Urban description and panegyrics in Brajbhasha were termed *nagar varnans*, while *shehrashubs* were found in the Persianate tradition. Like them, the paintings stirred emotions of collective joy with their depictions of idealised places, using metaphors of recall drawn from the experience of inhabiting Udaipur's palaces and lake-filled ambience. The curators punctuated the paintings with lines of poetry from the era to reprise this emotional overflow. They also included the more earthy and inclusive poetry of Jain monks such as Khetal who praised the hills and *bazaars* of Udaipur in addition to all else in the city that charmed the poet. Diverse literary voices, all speaking of the city's charms, show that different communities experienced and enjoyed the city in their own ways, a picture that was visually realised in the painting *Sunrise in Udaipur.*

This work and others also present a pictorial manipulation of maps as they depict places, movements, outings, and activities for a particular audience. *Sunrise in Udaipur* shows Maharana Sangram Singh and a group of courtiers including the prince Jagat Singh gathered near the city for a tiger hunt. The paintings are not bound by a single focus or temporal movement; for instance, the Jagmandir Palace on Lake Pichola is seen in this painting at an unusual angle because the artist's orientation centres on the Khas Odi, a hunting lodge. The painter has freely combined first-hand observation and aesthetic ideals, presenting various palaces and temples, built and natural features using multiple perspectives and strategies, highlighting these landmarks through

Dr. Dipti Khera speaks during 'In the Mood: Exhibiting Udaipur's Paintings of Place'

eclectic representation and commemorating their connection to kin and events. In addition to painting and poetry, cartography was strategically deployed by artists at this time to hold new communities together. Historically, it is probable that the paintings were viewed in assemblies that included the represented courtiers, who were then able to generate recall, reaffirming bonds to a place. Multiple viewings of a work by courtiers well-versed in poetics are sometimes recorded in scribal notations on the backs of the paintings, inflecting them further. The court was an institution at which noblemen, along with the king, were both subjects and viewers. The inscriptions, a primary source never studied or translated before, explicitly describe the subject of some depictions as the *bhava* of a particular place or event and include other valuable information, validating the premise of the exhibition which included five paintings with such scribal notations.

The curators used interpretive frameworks and visual juxtapositions to counter Orientalist views and enable present-day viewers to feel the *bhava* of these places by organising the galleries somewhat geographically to acknowledge the embodied experience of the visitor. The exhibition traversed a journey from Udaipur's lush, manmade centre, with paintings of the king enjoying the pleasures of the palaces on the Pichola Lake, to the city's surrounding areas, particularly in hunt scenes such as paintings of the King and his courtiers on a tiger hunt at Tikhliya Magara or a boar hunt at Nahar Magara where, characteristically, collaboration is emphasised over individual prowess. The latter painting precisely depicts the rugged land, a metaphor for the toughness of the king and courtiers. The long inscription was most likely recorded when a group of courtiers and the Maharana viewed the painting and relived the challenges of the hunt. It also records the sequence of events, and considers the painting as the visual memory of the enjoyment of the day and as the mood of Nahar Magara. "The *bhava* is of remarkable men together enjoying a remarkable land." The exhibition's journey culminated in a cosmological view of the land through the pictorial mapping of sacred sites.

Quite often, paintings were clustered together, creating syncopated rhythms to enhance connections and avoid a regular, staccato display. For instance, three paintings representing a courtyard of the Baadi Mahal in the City Palace were placed adjacent to each other, highlighting repetition and difference in palace architecture and mood, and enabling recognition in the visitor: the first two works represented the place with scalar and perspectival playfulness, while a third was a portrait of Maharana Bhimsen in a cusp-

Dr. Debra Diamond speaks during 'In the Mood: Exhibiting Udaipur's Paintings of Place'

arched *jharokha* window already depicted in the two perspectival views as a detail.

Each room was a distinct destination and mood. The emotional interaction of the city's people and environs with the monsoon, the annual rainy season which replenished its created water resources and brought prosperity and joy, was the focus in one of the galleries. The beauty and speed of the monsoon rains, along with the cool relief and greenery that they brought, can be seen in a dramatic, yet accurate, monumental painting, the entire right half of which shows the sweep of the monsoon coming in over the hills of Udaipur; at the same time, it precisely maps an artificial lake and sluices in the river. Another work, completed by the artist Shivlal in seven long years, delights in Udaipur's plentiful water resources and lush greenery, and memorialises the time in 1886 when the king, Maharana Fateh Singh, and his courtiers rode through a flooded terrain to inspect a canal. Here, a golden serpent of lightning snakes across the sky and the nourishing rain drenches everything. The monsoon mood is seen in these depictions of water harvesting, water resources, and the arrival of the monsoon, while in earlier paintings it is present as monsoon *ragas*, as well as love and longing. The monsoon was the season for the union of lovers as otherwise migrant working men returned to spend these months at home. The exhibition established place in these paintings as cultural landscape, where kings intervened to make the land productive and established kinship relations with their courtiers and their people through this land. For instance, water, the most precious of resources deployed by the king in the service of the land, was depicted in all the paintings in the exhibition except one. By highlighting this theme in the exhibition, the curators also mobilised the present-day audience's concern for the environment. In depicting the royal shrine of Shri Eklingji, the painter also focussed on the water resources surrounding this important site as well as human interventions such as a well. Incredibly, earlier art historians, blind to the fact that these innovative paintings tell *bhava*-drenched stories about Udaipur's urbanscapes and landscapes, labelled them as 'portraits'. Through the exhibition, the scholars questioned the flawed, Orientalist understanding of these works that was put forward as the British were establishing colonial rule in the subcontinent and revealed that this genre gave a new direction to Indian painting where it was not simply portraiture or representation of royal spectacle; where the emphasis lay instead on emotion, on male sociability, on the local, on politics, and on the environment. In the exhibition, these paintings are presented in a fresh manner as agents of historical change.

The curators also pointed out the impression of photography and illusionism on early 20th-century Udaipur paintings, and the boundaries of class and caste that are apparent, especially in a painting of the festival of the Goddess Sitala by Pannalal Parasuram Gaud. The spaces of the painting are gendered, reminding the viewer that the pleasures of male assemblies in this rugged land were far more common. The well-guarded walls of the city keep out several groups of lower-class onlookers, including women and a barefoot gardener, who cannot participate in the festivities, while the more elite merchants and traders from many communities, as well as a photographer, are depicted within the walls. Here, royal and elite women throng to the shrine on the left, and men rejoice on a terrace on the right, protected by armed soldiers ranged below. The yearning of those outside the walls is sharply felt and clearly represented by the painter. Perhaps tangential for the royal patrons, but included by the painters of other works, is the labour of ordinary people, such as cooks, gardeners, and performers who created these pleasurable events; this is in evidence in the new genre as it had never been in earlier works, even though much labour is obviously unacknowledged. Those central to creating mood were often relegated to the margins. The paintings offer tantalising glimpses of what is absent, and not mentioned in their inscriptions. The exhibition strategically decentred the focus on the king, following, for instance, two unnamed women performers who seem to have been cherished by the elites of Udaipur as they are depicted in multiple paintings. In a painting of such a performance, the artist inserts his self-portrait. He is also unacknowledged, until the exhibition *A Splendid Land*, as a creator of *bhava*. ***– J.K.***

Community Engagement

PAST PROGRAMMES

York Minster Centre of Excellence for Heritage Craft Skills and Estate Management

April 21st, 2023, 6:30 PM IST | Ms. Laura Cotter (Research and Partnerships Manager, York Minster Centre of Excellence in Heritage Craft Skills and Estate Management) and Mr. Lee Godfrey (Senior Mason, York Minster Centre of Excellence in Heritage Craft Skills and Estate Management)

Physical Public Lecture

The talk by Laura Cotter and Lee Godfrey focussed on outlining how the challenges faced in the conservation work at York Minster led to the adoption of new technologies, and how this eventually led to the envisioning and setting up of the Centre of Excellence for Heritage Craft Skills and Estate Management.

York Minster was built between 1230–1472 in a variety of Gothic styles using magnesium limestone from local quarries. It is the largest gothic building in Britain today and has the largest collection of medieval stained glass in Britain as well.

The building needs constant attention in the form of repairs and restoration of the stone work as well as protection of the priceless stained glass. The cost of maintaining the structure runs into millions of pounds. Most of this funding comes from visitors. York Minster gets approximately 1 million visitors every year, and it is important that the repair and restoration work does not obstruct visitor access to the structure while also maintaining safety.

The maintenance and upkeep of York Minster faces multiple challenges: financial, environmental, and heritage. There is no government funding, so donations and visitors are the main source of funds. The stone yard where the stone carving for the repair work is done is the highest cost. Besides costs, there is also the factor of the race against time in the conservation work due to accelerated stone erosion resulting from increasing volumes of rainfall.

The other challenge is the shortage of trained people to work in the stone yard. The repair work of heritage buildings depends on these, and so conserving skills of stone masons and glaziers is important, and this knowledge transfer is a key requirement.

Looking at all these challenges, a research and development project was launched in 2018 with the following objectives:

1. Establish best practices.
2. Investigate new techniques and technology (to help reduce costs and time spent on the work being done by the masons).
3. Enhance historic base with new skills.
4. Increase volume of conservation.
5. Focus on four main areas: Measurement and documentation, cutting tech, handling equipment, and project management.

To meet these objectives, both Laura Cotter and Lee Godfrey travelled and visited many trade fairs and conferences, and also built knowledge-sharing collaborations with similar heritage structures in the US, Milan, Norway, and Cologne.

Some of the products they found included technology that would help reduce the time spent doing the same work by hand, as well as new material that could be used to reduce the intervention for renovation work:

Ms. Laura Cotter & Mr. Lee Godfrey speak during York Minster Centre of Excellence for Heritage Craft Skills and Estate Management

1. Proliner helps in measurement and creating new building drawing templates, and provides a time saving of almost 80% against doing it manually.
2. Technology like photogrammetry and 3D scanning helps in scanning 3D stone sculptures, which could further be used to replicate the same design for renovation.
3. Cutting technology for stone does the rough cutting for the sculpture and provides almost 30% time saving.
4. 3D printing technology is also now being explored.
5. New material in the form of basalt and a new specialised repair mortar has also been incorporated.
6. New scaffolding types are being explored which can be put up and taken down faster.

The idea was to balance technology and hand skills in order to optimise costs and time.

This led to envisaging the Centre of Excellence for Craft Skills and Estate Management which will be opening in 2024. The centre will incorporate all the new technology and will train masons and craftsmen to optimise conservation work. It will have residential and training facilities for up to 19 mason apprentices at a time.

The Centre also helps reassure masons and craftspeople that their career and future are safe at the York Minster, the new Centre being a tangible investment in the same.

The iconic symbol of the Centre of Excellence, a statue of Queen Elizabeth, was to be inaugurated at the site to commemorate the platinum jubilee and was to be a true representation of the interplay between craft and technology – which is the vision of the Centre.

The process of sculpting the statue was an exercise in combining new technology and the masons' skills. It was first hand-modelled at a small scale in clay. This model was 3D-scanned, and this scan was then used to mill it in polyurethane at the true scale, with clay and plaster added on top by hand. Being a light material, this full-scale PU model could easily be lifted to the final location and checked for size, proportion, etc.

This larger model was once again 3D-scanned, and this scan was used to mill the final stone to 0.5mm of the final product. The finishing of the statue was finally completed by hand by the skilled masons. This experience also led the stone masons, who were initially resistant to the idea of technology and felt threatened by it, to come around to understanding and accepting it.

The Centre of Excellence plans to outsource their services to other heritage sites that may need such specialised stone work but which don't have their own stone yards – thereby continuing to use and preserve the craft of stone masonry while at the same time continuing the conservation work of York Minster.

The Centre plans to continue exploring and incorporating more new technology towards this goal. **– *M.G.***

Announcements

POSTGRADUATE COURSE IN INDIAN AESTHETICS

July 2023 – April 2024 | Typically Saturdays 2:00 to 6:00 pm

Hybrid mode: PHYSICAL & ONLINE | Online Platform: Zoom

Plaque with Winged Kamadeva
Chandraketugarh
Sungha, c. 2nd century BCE
Terracotta, 22 x 10.5 cm

Introduced in 1999, Jnanapravaha Mumbai's academic, year-long Postgraduate Diploma/ Certificate course in Indian Aesthetics (IA) examines the historical development of visual forms in context, employing the disciplines of art history, archaeology, architecture, anthropology, literature and philosophy. The course traverses 5,000 years of Indian visual art, including pre-modern, modern, and contemporary forms as well as popular traditions, to illuminate aesthetic trajectories in the sub-continent. Internationally renowned scholars introduce students to this art, ensuring a material, geographical, historical, social and cultural base that is broad and extensively representative. In keeping with JPM's mission, the course has evolved over the years to include topics of current research.

For admission, you are required to submit:
A digital copy each of your last degree certificate, CV, short bio (100 words) and passport-size photograph.

Fee structure:
Diploma (subject to writing and attendance) – Rs. 60,000 | Certificate (subject to attendance) – Rs. 50,000

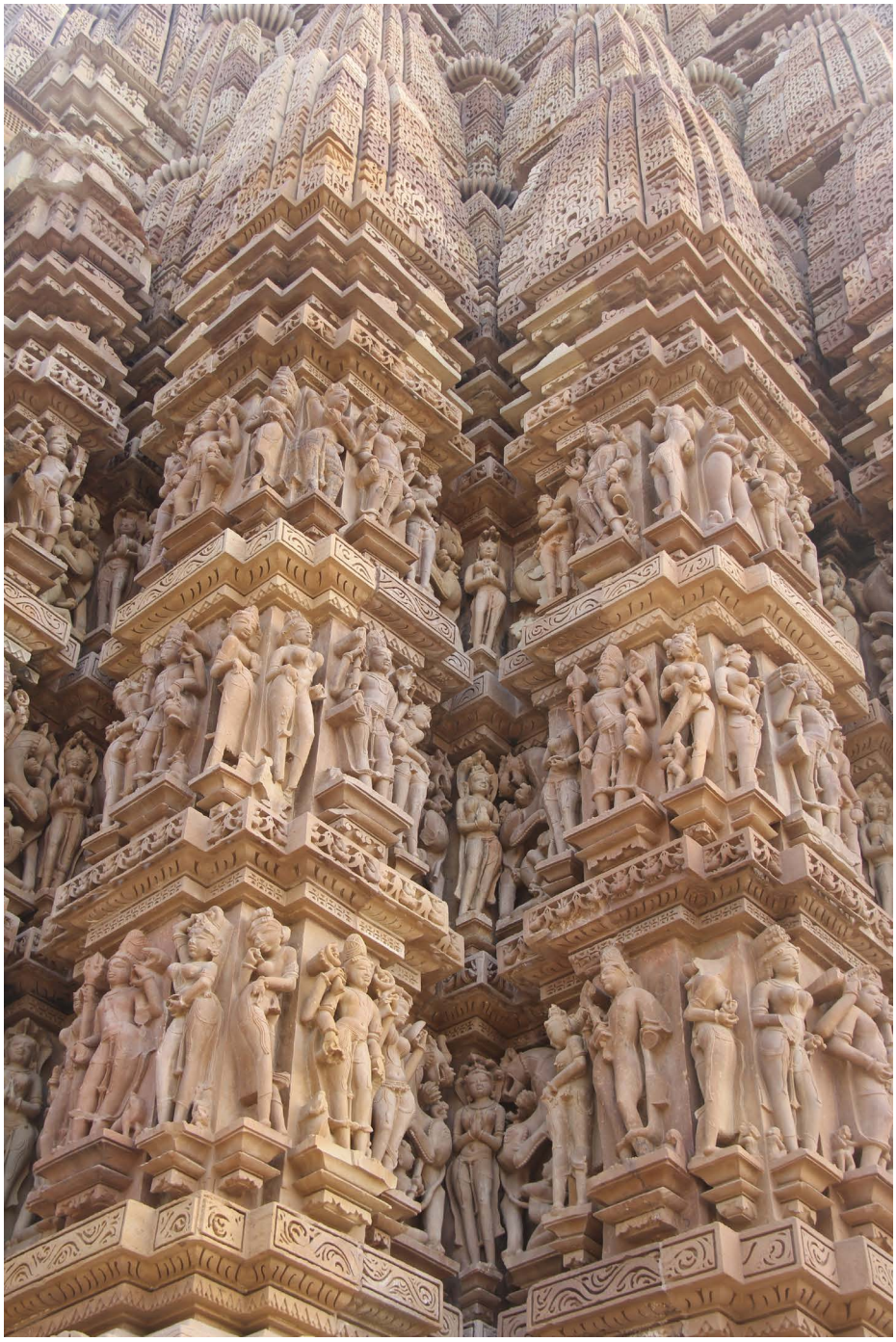
Registration: www.jp-india.org

THE INDIAN TEMPLES

A semester-long certificate course offering fresh insights based on latest research findings

August 10th – November 16th, 2023 | Mainly Wednesdays 6:30 to 8:30 pm IST

Online Platform: Zoom



Khajuraho_Temple-Madhya_Pradesh- Image courtesy - Wiki Commons

Faculty Scholars:

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Nachiket Chanchani
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Pia Brancaccio
Pushkar Sohoni
Subhashini Kaligotla
Tamara Sears
Vidya Dehejia

Curated by: Dr. Neeraja Poddar

Supported by: Jai & Sugandha Hiremath-Hikal Ltd.

Fee structure:
Certificate (subject to attendance) – Rs. 16,000

The course covers temples that were built across the Indian Subcontinent from the third century BCE to the early modern era. Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain contexts of temple-making will be considered; speakers will adopt a range of approaches in the study of these architectural wonders, including form, iconography, patronage, socio-cultural milieu, rituals, and the imagining of sacred landscapes. The goal is to showcase the beauty and power of Indian temples and explore their importance in the lives of the people they serve/d.

Jnanapravaha Mumbai is deeply indebted to the following for their support:

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Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation
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Dipak & Rohitashwa Poddar
Saroj Poddar, Adventz Group Of Companies
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Anurag Kanoria
Deepak & Smita Parekh, HDFC Ltd.
Maithili Parekh & Shashank Singh
Aditya Ruia
Shamina Talyarkhan
Bahram & Arti Vakil
Dayanita Singh

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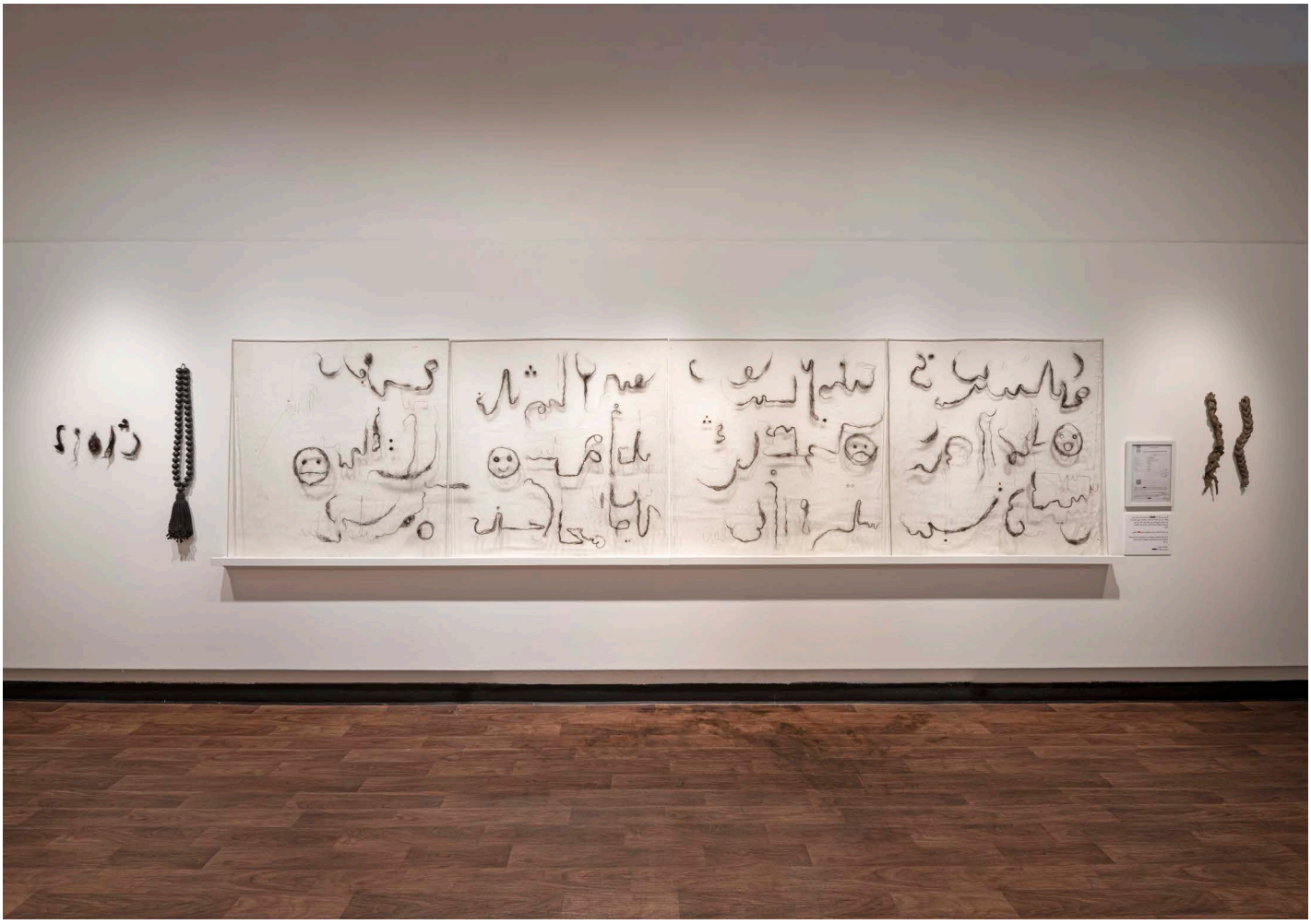
Jnanapravaha is a registered Trust. Contributions qualify for 80G benefits. We are eligible for CSR contributions, as specified in the Companies Act (2013), and have been awarded FCRA clearance from the Government of India. For further information, please contact our support team at support@jp-india.org.



Sharjah Bienniel15 - Artist: Mithu Sen

We know we have made a difference. Our endeavour to encourage and facilitate pedagogy meaningfully continues with the firm belief that the humanities are indispensable to the well-being of the community and the individual.

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