

Open Call Panels

ACSAA Symposium XVIII

October 12-15, 2017

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and Harvard University

Paper Proposals Due: **March 15 2017 to chairs of each panel**

The following Four Open Call panels are available for individual paper submission.

Note: Unsuccessful submissions to open call panels will be considered for individual paper panels by the symposium selection committee.

Boston and Beyond: The Art Historical Legacies of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

Chairs: Brinda Kumar (Metropolitan Museum of Art, bk269@cornell.edu) and Janice Leoshko (University of Texas, Austin, jleoshko@austin.utexas.edu)

The study and collection of South Asian art especially flourished in the Boston area due to myriad factors (both institutionally and individually) long at play before Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) arrived in 1917 at the Museum of Fine Arts. But his presence there for the next thirty years as well as his relationships with scholars, collectors, dealers and various museums critically shaped the discipline of art history in key ways not only in Boston but elsewhere in the United States. This panel invites papers that consider Coomaraswamy's role in contouring South Asian art history in the early 20th century and the legacies of his work as a curator and scholar.

His seminal volumes such as *Rajput Painting* (1916) and *The History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (1927) would arguably delineate canons, establish methodological approaches and even have a popular cultural impact. Over time, generations of art historians have grappled with Coomaraswamy's writings and curatorial choices often critiquing, bringing nuance to, or expanding upon his interventions. How did his approach prioritize certain kinds of narratives and art historical methods over others? In what ways did his questions shape (or serve as a foil to) subsequent studies; how for instance, did his eschewal of hybridity and privileging of pre-modern art and spiritualist readings of works create enduring narratives of South Asian culture? How and why was Coomaraswamy's approach important in the historical context of his writing and various activities? We are especially interested in papers that reflect on Coomaraswamy's legacy as we consider the 21st century stakes and questions for South Asian art history in and outside the museum.

Histories of the Sensorium in South Asian Art

Chairs: Subhashini Kaligotla (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, subhashini.kaligotla@khi.fi.it), Anna Seastrand (University of Chicago, seastrand@uchicago.edu)

The historiography of South Asian art has tended to emphasize the visual experience of temples and other built spaces while excluding from consideration the multisensorial engagement of the body in these environments. Similarly, traditional art historical approaches focus on fixing the chronology of monuments, neglecting a more synthetic approach. The methodological shift emerging in new scholarship that we want to highlight in this panel moves from static considerations of style and iconography, focused strictly on the visual, to approaches that engage the dynamic multisensorial life of built spaces, and the spatial and temporal experience of those who move through them. We solicit papers that consider issues within the full range of sensory experience and may include aesthetic pleasure and affective response. We are open to diverse methodological perspectives that may draw upon hitherto uninvestigated sources. Papers might consider the soundscape of the temple, court, city, or museum; the role of touch in devotion; the semiotics of scent; the connection between architecture and affect, memory, or performance, including dance, music, and storytelling. How do consumption and gustatory sensibility shape devotional experience? How are different kinds of pleasure solicited through built space and its adornments? How do we write a history of sense perception for the visual arts? What South Asian sources and aesthetic theories can we draw upon? This panel is an invitation to art historians to develop methodological approaches that integrate traditional art historical sources with sensorial, aesthetic, and phenomenological considerations in the history of South Asian art.

Not All at Sea: Material Histories on Oceanic Thresholds

Chairs: Sylvia Houghteling (Bryn Mawr College, shoughteli@brynmawr.edu) and Dipti Khera (New York University, dipti.khera@nyu.edu)

Dazzling textiles, pungent spices and precious maps. Merchant houses, factories and forts. Travel itineraries, lists and letters. Objects, architecture and texts traversing the waters and the frontiers of the Indian Ocean defy multiple boundaries—spatial, ontological, and technological. This panel invites participants to consider material histories occurring on oceanic thresholds that present a local, liminal or interregional perspective.

The merchants, pilgrims, scholars and messengers who traversed the ports of South Asia formed connections throughout Indian Ocean regions, becoming central to the global economy of goods, art and ideas. Yet historical entanglements occurred across differing scales and multiple modes of mobility, not just along global itineraries. For this

panel, we seek papers that focus not only on large-scale trade patterns but also on the way trade and circulation transformed local, often littoral, spaces from the Bay of Bengal to the Persian Gulf. We welcome papers on art and aesthetic practices across time periods that unite discussions of local, regional, trans-regional and global travels that are usually confined to discrete conceptual spheres. We hope to discuss how the lives of people and things encompassed both maritime and inland cultures. Studies of eclectic, hybrid and multilayered forms and practices will help rethink the established temporal and regional boundaries that exist in art histories of South Asia and beyond.

Defining the Portrait in South Asia: Form & Function

Chairs: Krista Gulbransen (Whitman College, gulbrakh@whitman.edu) & Murad Khan Mumtaz (University of Virginia, mkm9na@virginia.edu)

In his 1939 essay “The Traditional Conception of Ideal Portraiture,” A.K. Coomaraswamy describes the conceptual and formal disparities between Mughal and Rajput figural representation, stating that “in India we have to take account of two different kinds of portraiture, respectively posthumous, hieratic, and ideal on the one hand, and taken from life, profane, and sentimental on the other.” Though more recent scholarship has challenged this binary between Mughal and Rajput painting, Coomaraswamy’s broad and inclusive definition of portraiture, moving beyond notions of mimesis and naturalism, continues to influence studies of the genre in South Asia. In the absence of a singular set of aesthetic standards, current definitions of the genre often emphasize the social function of the portrait over notions of likeness.

This panel seeks to explore the shifting aesthetics and function of portraiture in South Asia. Papers that interrogate existing or conventional definitions of portraiture and propose new models for studying the genre are particularly encouraged. We invite papers that explore various media (painting, sculpture, photography, literature, etc.), time periods, and geographical regions in order to demonstrate the historical contingency of portrait aesthetics and shifting concepts of likeness. Topics of interest include (but are not limited to) the role of the portrait in gift exchange, portraits as talismans, the interplay of text and image in establishing identity, self-portraiture as performance, the portrait as locus of power, memory and documentation, the portrait as a mode of communication, posthumous portraiture and historical legacy, and the portrait as a technology for surveillance.