

## Buddhist Geoaesthetics (Providence, 3–5 May 19)

Department of the History of Art and Architecture / Department of Religious Studies,  
Brown University, Providence, RI, USA, May 3–04, 2019

Jason Protass

### Buddhist Geoaesthetics

On May 3-4, Brown University will host a conference entitled “Buddhist Geoaesthetics” to discuss the history of Buddhist arts, thought, and practices in their relationships to ecological and geological processes, bringing together diverse disciplinary and geographic perspectives.

Recent scholarship on Buddhist cave shrines and sacred mountains has already begun to deploy geological frameworks of analysis, examining such topics as the dynamic relationship between human and geological agency in the organization of ritual environments. The goal of this conference is to expand and critique the terms of these inquiries through a discussion of the earth and its forces across the wider field of Buddhist Studies.

Conference participants will take up three major themes. First, how, when, and where has the physical stuff of the earth impinged on the historical practices and cultures of Buddhism? Second, how did Buddhists understand what we today would call ‘the environment’ – how did they think about their earth? And third, in what ways have Buddhists made assertions about time and space that vastly exceed the scope of conventional human experience, and what kinds of religious work have such assertions performed?

Our goal is not a coherent sense of a unifying Buddhist geoaesthetics, but a collective impression of the many ways in which discrete Buddhist engagements with the earth express distinctive aesthetic visions. By giving voice to the plurality and complexity of these visions, we hope to stimulate new, productive responses to the epistemological challenges of the environmental humanities.

The conference is free and open to the public. Please see the conference program below. Paper abstracts and more information are also available on the conference website:

<https://www.brown.edu/academics/art-history/events/buddhist-geoaesthetics>

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BUDDHIST GEOAESTHETICS

May 3 and 4, 2019

Nightingale-Brown House

357 Benefit Street

Providence, RI 02912

Friday, May 3

9:30–9:50 AM

OPENING REMARKS

Jeffrey Moser and Jason Protass

10:00 AM–12:15 PM

PANEL 1

Floods, Wars, and Factories in (re)constructing Riverine Buddhism along the Lower Yangzi

Jason Protass, Brown University

Flesh Mountain: Human Bodies on a Non-Human Scale

Reiko Ohnuma, Dartmouth College

The Geoethetics of Ritual in a Song-Dynasty Buddhist Sanctuary

Phillip Bloom, The Huntington

1:30–3:00 PM

PANEL 2

Mapping the Ascetic Mount Fuji

Janine Sawada, Brown University

Recreating Liu Benzun's Healing Regime at Cave Temples: Baodingshan as a Therapeutic Devotional Ground

Sonya Lee, University of Southern California

3:45–5:15 PM

PANEL 3

Mountains, Waters, and Dharmakāya: Toward a Geoethetic Reading of Kūkai's Irrigation Projects

Ryūichi Abé, Harvard University

Human Places and Cosmic Spaces: Ecological Engagements in Early Medieval India

Tamara Sears, Rutgers University

Saturday, May 4

9:00–10:30 AM

PANEL 4

What are the Embellished Buddhist Caves For?

Eugene Wang, Harvard University

Gendered Geoaesthetics: Dali-Kingdom Carvings at Stone Treasure Mountain

Megan Bryson, University of Tennessee

10:45 AM–12:15 PM

PANEL 5

Places of Art: Buddhist Imagery, Spatiality, and Landscape

Eric Huntington, Stanford University

The Japanese Image of the Buddhist Earth: Geography, Cosmology, and the Culture of Vision

Max Moerman, Barnard College

1:30–3:00 PM

PANEL 6

Zoomorphs as Geomorphs in Kamakura Buddhist Painting

Rachel Saunders, Harvard University

'Occasions Both Worldly and Transcendent': Sacred Trees in Buddha's India

Maria Heim, Amherst College

3:45–5:15 PM

PANEL 7

Reading the Chinese Religious Landscape: The Text in Topography and Topography in Text

James Robson, Harvard University

Geomorphism as Localism in Chinese Buddhist Sculpture

Jeffrey Moser, Brown University

Reference:

CONF: Buddhist Geoaesthetics (Providence, 3-5 May 19). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 25, 2019 (accessed Aug 29, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/20716>>.