

Gandhara Connections

4th International Workshop, Oxford 26th-27th March 2020

The Rediscovery & Reception of Gandharan Art

The Gandhara Connections project aims to understand Gandharan art in its ancient contexts, fostering fresh discussion of its puzzling cross-cultural connections and other archaeological problems. But at the same time, the significance of this extraordinary tradition is inevitably rooted in the concerns and preoccupations of the modern world.

In this fourth international workshop of the Project, we seek to stimulate an exchange of new information and ideas about two aspects of Gandharan art in the modern world.

Firstly, we will examine the 'rediscovery' of Gandharan culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To what extent can the consideration of museum collections, archival documents, and other evidence help us to reconstitute lost information about the provenance and meaning of Gandharan artefacts and sites? And a broader question: how is such evidence shaped and mediated by the experience of Gandhara in the context of colonial rule? Can we – and should we – try to think Gandharan art out of that political, cultural, and ideological setting in which it was first recognized as an academic field?

Secondly, we will consider the subsequent shifting, and often disputed, significance of Gandharan art in different places and periods, in South Asia and Central Asia, in Europe, America and the Far East; in world museums, private collections and the controversial antiquities market; in public perceptions of cross-cultural connections and the so-called 'Silk Road'; from narratives of national identity and cultural heritage, to popular ideas of ancient and modern globalization....

Bringing together an international line-up of invited speakers from different institutional and disciplinary backgrounds, the objective of the workshop is not to undermine attempts to study Gandharan art objectively, but to cast light on the modern contexts which are bound to frame, enliven, and sometimes impede that effort.