

COURSE CONTENT

Course Code	DD3026 (DD8011)
Course Title	Aesthetic Manifestations of Buddhist Devotion & Practice
Pre-requisites	NIL
No of AUs	3
Contact Hours	39 hours studio contact

Course Aims

This course is intended to deepen and widen your pre-existing knowledge of Asian or Buddhist art, and to develop critical frameworks for rethinking prevailing canons of Buddhist art. It covers a selection of artefacts, sites and works of art from over two millennia from ca. 300BCE to the 21st century. The geographical scope mirrors the internationalisation of Buddhism, from South Asia to East, Southeast Asia, and the Western world, since the first millennium. We ask: how have Buddhist teachings been interpreted by image-makers over space and time, and how have the representations been subsequently experienced, read and used, and what makes “Buddhist art” “Buddhist” and “art”? These studies will provide a basis for further in-depth studies of Buddhist Art.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Identify and discuss Buddhist artefacts, sites and works of art from ca. 300BCE to the 21st century.
2. Discern and discuss adaptations and transformations of Buddhist concepts and imagery from South to East and Southeast Asia, and to Euro-America.
3. Demonstrate visual memory skills and be able to differentiate between the different styles, and identify the figures and symbols represented, in Buddhist Art.
4. Present research findings related to Buddhist Art in a clear and cohesive manner.
5. Share and critique analyses of Buddhist Art in a constructive manner.

Course Content

What are the most representative examples of Buddhist artefacts, sites and works of art from ca 300BCE to the 21st century?

You will be shown a range of Buddhist visual materials from South, East and Southeast Asia, Europe and North America from the inception of Buddhist art to the contemporary: stupas, seals, coins, monumental sculptures, paintings, installations, etc.

What are the principal figures and symbols featured in Buddhist art?

You will learn how to identify the different Buddhist superior beings and their meanings: arhats, Buddhas, bodhisattvas, etc. They are also initiated to the symbolic meanings of aniconic representations.

How have Buddhist teachings been interpreted by image-makers over space and time and how have the representations been subsequently experienced, read and used?

You will explore the ways in which the representation of a single concept, figure or symbol transformed over space and time, as well as how the reception of the representation has varied.

What makes “Buddhist art” “Buddhist” and “art”?

You will be invited to reflect on the contradictions between the raison d'être of Buddhist images and the notion of art as a commodity today.

Class assignments

The Oral Presentation is an exercise on the analysis of an artwork's formal and iconographic qualities, intrinsic meanings and art historical significance, as well as its effective communication. The Written Assignment demands that you compare and contrast, and engage with a wider range of issues. The Visual Memory Exercise trains you in visual memory skills which are vital for the study of art.