

Arts of Asia Lecture Series Spring 2015
Masterpieces and Iconic Artworks of the Asian Art Museum
Sponsored by The Society for Asian Art

“The Buddha Triumphant Over Mara: Form and Meaning in Buddhist Art”

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Goal of Lecture

To explore a single masterpiece in the Asian Art Museum Collection from numerous perspectives, including the historical and religious purpose of the work, its importance as a representative of the Pala School of Indian sculpture, and the materials and techniques involved in its creation.

Vocabulary and Terms

Pala Dynasty (8th-12th century, eastern India and Bangladesh)

Sakyamuni Buddha (historical Buddha of our era)

Mara (“Death,” the enemy of the Buddha)

Mara Vijaya (Buddha’s victory over Mara)

Bodh Gaya (Site in eastern India where Mara Vijaya occurred)

Bodhi tree (Location at Bodh Gaya where Mara Vijaya occurred)

Buddhism (the moral, ethical system that is the Buddha’s legacy)

Samsara (the world of illusion in which we dwell)

Karma (our actions, good or bad, as determinants of our progress)

Nirvana (the ultimate goal of Buddhism; to escape samsara)

Four Noble Truths (the principles underpinning Buddhist teachings)

Eightfold Path (the method by which we can escape samsara and attain nirvana)

Suggested Reading

Casey, Jane Anne. *Medieval Sculpture from Eastern India: Selections From the Nalin Collection*. (New Jersey: Nalini International, 1985). See especially the appendices regarding the materials out of which the Pala-period works are made.

Huntington, Susan L., with contributions by John C. Huntington. *Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*. (Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1985; reprint, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2014). See Chapter 18.

Huntington, Susan L. and John C. Huntington. *Leaves From the Bodhi Tree: The Art of Pala India and Its International Legacy*. (Dayton and Seattle: Dayton Art Institute and the University of Washington press, 1990).

Stadtner, Donald M., “Father, Please Give us Back our Beauty: The Daughters of Mara in the Art of Burma.” *Orientalisms* (Spring, 2015).