

Arts of Asia Lecture Series Fall 2011
The Arts of South Asia & the Islamic World: Beliefs Made Visible
Sponsored by The Society for Asian Art
Vidya Dehejia Columbia University, Oct. 7, 2011

AN APPARENT PARADOX
THE SENSUOUS AS SACRED IN HINDU INDIA
Images in AAM 3rd floor galleries

Intro: The body as leitmotif in India's art & the importance of adornment

1. Shiva as “the thief who stole my heart away”, especially in south India

Dancing Shiva as *Nataraja* of King of Dance

Destroyer of the three forts [*Tripurantaka*]

The body adorned in bronze, and further adorned with jeweled offerings

Enchanting Mendicant [*Bhikshatana*]

Tiruvenkadu bronze of ca 1040

Darasuram stone tableau of 12th c.

Mela-perum-pallam bronze of 12th c.

2. Uma Parameshvari (south) or Parvati (north) whose “swaying gait mocks the peacock's grace.”

As consort of Shiva: bronze images of 9th/10th c.

Devi or Durga destroying the buffalo demon Mahisha: India-wide appeal

Mamallapuram and Chidambaram (south), Brahmor (north) and

Jagat (west)

3. Vishnu of the “lovely dark body of unfailing beauty”: India-wide appeal

Chola bronzes and stone

Stone from Madhya Pradesh

Reclining Vishnu

DIVINE UNION

4. Shiva and Uma/Parvati's “playful amorous enjoyment”: India-wide appeal

The marriage at Elephanta and Ellora

Marriage bronzes from Tiruvenkadu, ca. 1015

Ellora images of togetherness

Rajput paintings of the divine family

Somaskanda bronzes

Images of conjugal bliss

Chola stones and bronzes

Madhya Pradesh stone

Rajput paintings

5. Shiva as Ardha-nari or Half-woman: south Asia-wide appeal

Nepal & Kalighat

Elephanta

Mahakuta (Deccan)

Chola stone

Chola bronze from Tiruvenkadu, ca. 1020

6. Vishnu and Lakshmi's "ecstatic amorous dalliance": India-wide

Courtly literature: Kalidasa: ca. 400

SACRED HYMNS

1. South Indian "saints" of Shiva: Nayanmars or "Leaders"

Child Sambandar: 7th century

Appar: 7th century

Sundarar: ca. 800

2. "Saints" of Vishnu: Alvars (Deep divers [into the divine])

Tiruppan-alvar: ca. 850?

Andal: woman: ca. 800

3. Acharyas or Teachers

Vedanta Desikar: 12th century

READINGS

[In chronological order, starting with the most recent]

Vidya Dehejia, *The Body Adorned. Dissolving Boundaries between Sacred and Profane*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009

Vidya Dehejia, *The Sensuous and the Sacred: Chola Bronzes from South India*, New York: American Federation of the Arts, 2002

Padma Kaimal, "Shiva Nataraja: Shifting Meanings of an Icon," *Art Bulletin* 81, no. 3 (1999): 390-419.

Indira Peterson, *Poems to Siva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989

Vidya Dehejia, *Slaves of the Lord: The Path of the Tamil Saints*, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1988