

Gandhara Connections

5th International Workshop, Monday 21st to Wednesday 23rd March 2022

Gandharan Art in its Buddhist Context

The fifth and final annual international workshop tackles perhaps the most fundamental topic of all for the understanding of Gandharan art. Hosted on Zoom from Oxford and Bangkok, this online event will bring together invited expert speakers and a truly global audience to debate, meet and share the latest research. Presentations will be in English, with planned simultaneous translation into Mandarin Chinese (and potentially other languages).

Gandharan art is of profound interest to researchers working on a wide range of regions and subjects including, of course, the global connections of Graeco-Roman culture. But its immediate religious contexts and its significance for the ancient Buddhist population are of primary importance. Over the last five years the workshop series has considered this tradition in respect to the overlapping issues of chronology, regional geography, cross-cultural influence, and modern reception. We now return to the monasteries and shrines of Gandhara to understand more about why Gandharan art was made and what its iconography and stylistic repertoire meant to its original users and viewers.

This effort is hampered by comparatively limited evidence for the original settings of sculptures, the loss of less durable artistic media, huge gaps in our knowledge of the Gandharan settlements and their mixed populations, and the small (though growing) body of literary and epigraphic evidence for cult practices and beliefs. At the same time, it is challenging to correlate the archaeology of Gandhara with the vast and complex body of literary evidence for evolving religious ideas and beliefs in other parts of the ancient Buddhist world.

In this workshop, an invited panel of international speakers will apply their diverse expertise and the most recent discoveries in order to try and tackle such challenges, animating the remains of Gandharan art with fresh insights into their ancient function and meaning.