The 2000s was a precarious decade. Neoliberalism, with its associated rearrangement of urban lifestyles and consumption patterns, had led to a radical transformation in museum cultures and collecting practices in India. The opening of gigantic malls where one could buy Prada, Armani, and contemporary art, the mushrooming of galleries and private museums in metropolitan centers and small towns, and blockbuster exhibitions in New York, London, Paris, and Tokyo signaled the arrival of contemporary Indian art in a global art system. “Indian artist enjoys his world audience,” the New York Times ceremoniously announced in 2006, shortly after Tyeb Mehta’s canvas crossed the proverbial million-dollar mark in an auction in New York. The Government of India was not to be left behind. With an eighty million Rupees budget, the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Rajasthan renovated seventeen museums across the state in the early 2000s. Much like the renaming of Indian cities, the state government attempted to transform its museums – vestiges of colonial governance – into appropriate symbols of a new globalized Rajasthan. The National Gallery of Modern Art too opened satellite museums in Mumbai and Bengaluru. By the late 2000s, the art bubble had, however, burst due to a series of market failures across the globe. Artists, collectors, and galleries claimed it was back to business as usual.

But what is business as usual? Organized by the Institute for South Asia Studies in association with...
the History of Art Department, the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, and the Arts Research Center, Collecting South Asia | Archiving South Asia (February 18, 2014) was an attempt to theorize the aesthetic, political, and cultural systems of business as usual. Focusing on assemblages of capital, connoisseurship, and collecting practices, the one-day international conference brought together art historians, anthropologists, curators, and museum professionals from the United States, Europe, and the Middle East to collaboratively rethink histories of collecting and archiving from the nineteenth century to the present.

The decision to demarcate a temporal frame from the nineteenth century to the present was, indeed, strategic. Powered by global capital, the recent success of the art market had a striking parallel in the nineteenth century with the emergence of colonial archives, expositions, and labyrinthine bureaucracies orchestrated as reform. Following the unprecedented success of the 1851 Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, an international exposition in London that had brought together objects and artworks from across the British empire, one encountered Indian art ubiquitously in London. Shortly after the Great Exhibition, colonial art administrators had advocated the display of South Asian artifacts in British museums and art schools as outstanding specimens of decorative design. Directly bringing together industrial capitalism and design reform, the exhibitionary order of the colonial museum thus established a correlation among globalization, empire, and large-scale commodification of design.

Along with design reform, the Great Exhibition also, in certain ways, led to the establishment of the Archaeological Survey of India (officially inaugurated in 1861) with its elaborate structure of metropolitan, regional, and site museums. The conservation of archaeological monuments as a record of the colony’s history, wide-ranging documentation projects driven by new techniques of photography, and the collecting of representative examples of Indian architecture through plaster cast reproductions led to the formation of a comprehensive repository of “useful” knowledge about the colony. The narrative of the production and accumulation of knowledge became integral to the fantasy, indeed conceit, of the imperial archive. The archive was thus also a panoptical apparatus through which the empire rhetorically asserted the moral necessity, the civilizing mission, of their presence in the colony.

In the decades following Independence, this archive, consisting of in situ monuments, museums, and a vast collection of photographs and architectural drawings, was repopulated with new desires that now sought to stage a hoary history of nationhood through art. As new arrangements of exclusionary chauvinisms led to a reshaping of...
the imperial archive, the National Museum in New Delhi was formally established on August 15, 1949, precisely two years after India's independence, as a central locus for the collection of the most evocative of the country’s art. The empire's archive was now an archive of, and for, the nation.

Collecting South Asia | Archiving South Asia thus opened with the nineteenth century to think of the analogies, paradoxes, and juxtapositions that marks collecting and archiving practices under the sign of global modernity. From the colonial archives of Bombay to contemporary collaborative art in Mumbai, from biometric national cards as an archive of imagined citizenship to the male body as an archive of desires, from illicit trade in antiquities to a hands-on approach towards displaying South Asian art in museums and galleries, the conference deliberately posed the question of the archive in trans-disciplinary terms. What does the word archive or the act of collecting signify in anthropology, art history, and feminist studies? How do museum professionals and curators generate an archive?

Rather than casting the archive as an effect of (post)colonial governmentality (as is customarily done), speakers paid close attention to the affective techné of collecting and processing information, memory, and memorialization. This attention to the performative and aesthetic function of archiving allowed for a relinking of event, affect, and memory. Unsettling the very notion of the archive machine as simply a technique of collecting, arranging, and classifying information, the speakers presented archive production as a hermeneutical performance in itself. What constitutes the recursive shapes of archiving flows, interfaces, and metadata?

While the following sections of the South Asia Research Note provide a comprehensive analysis of the February conference, let me very briefly delineate the urgency of thinking the archive in this very peculiar time, a time when both art practice and history-writing face repeated censorship in the hands of self-proclaimed custodians of culture, heritage, and memory.

On May 9, 2007, a final-year student at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda was arrested under sections 153A, 114, and 295 of the Indian Penal Code for promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion and race and committing acts prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony. Instigated by the local Hindu rightwing moral brigade, the Gujarat state police had found the student’s examination work – a woodcut print of the goddess Durga – offensive and an affront to ideals of Indian (Hindu) femininity. In protest, students organized an exhibition of Indian erotic imagery housed at the Regional Documentation Center of the Department of Art History and Aesthetics, Faculty of Fine Arts. As the first archive of art history in post-Independence India, the material housed at the Regional Documentation Center, alongside the pedagogy that it generated, had played a central role in shaping the discipline of art history. Selecting images – both modern and premodern – from the archive to delineate the history of eroticism in India, students put up an impromptu exhibition on May 11 to contextualize the artwork in question within preexisting paradigms of Indian art. On the instruction of the Vice Chancellor of the university, the exhibition was, however, forcibly shut down, and Professor Shivaji Panikkar, the Acting-Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts, suspended for supporting students. University officials sealed the archive of the Department of Art History.

It was the archive of art history – a collection of photographs from research and fieldwork at remote and often inaccessible monuments, plates culled from books, and newspaper clippings from the 1950s onwards – that was at the eye of the storm. To be clear, here the contestation was about the protocols of the archive as representation and affective domain. Certainly, the Hindu rightwing and their supporters in the upper echelons of the MS University administration did not have a problem with the Department of Art History's archive as long as it remained a controlled repository.
of information. It was only when the archive dangerously exceeded its own purported limits and protocols to viscerally assert a new arena of knowledge production that it needed to be censored and subsequently sealed. Competing, indeed conflicting, notions of the archive thus came into play, eventually leading to the first post-colonial art history department in India losing its autonomy to henceforth function under perpetual siege.

Underscoring the archive as a contested arena of public (and occasionally private) performance,
The conference began with a riveting introduction by Lawrence Cohen about the recent collection of biometric data in India through the Aadhaar national identification program. Cohen’s discussion laid out some of the stakes of creating an archive such as this - what it means to collect certain kinds of information (e.g. about caste), the problems of duplication, and the potential this data has for social and labor development initiatives. As Cohen points out, the archive of Aadhaar, that is of people registered in the new identification program, creates a new federation, and as such raises all sorts of interesting questions.
Following the introductory panel and the methodological and theoretical themes about archiving and collecting that it put forth, the panel (Un)Making the Episteme: The Nineteenth Century presented an interdisciplinary perspective on the archive in history.

Janice Leoshko spoke about late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century practices of collecting South Asian art by exploring the approach to studying Buddhist sculpture in eastern India by figures such as Alexander Cunningham, a British archeologist, and the nationalist art historian, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. Leoshko showed the complex ways in which religion and art were intertwined during this moment in history, and how much of what we see when looking at temples such as Bodhgaya is misleading with many Buddhist objects appearing at sites far from where they were originally intended to be worshipped or found during archaeological digs.

Expanding on this turn-of-the-century moment and the way in which Buddhist objects were understood, Sugata Ray examined early British perceptions of the Buddha’s body as “effeminate.” Ray revealed that colonial scholarship, and thus the colonial archive, framed South Asian Buddhist images as feminine in style, made by equally effeminate male Indian artists. For the British, these effeminate Buddhas were, on the one hand, evocative of their purported sense of serenity, peacefulness and enlightenment, and on the other hand, reflective of an aesthetic ideal that stood in stark contrast to British (read: neo-classical) brands of hyper masculinity.

The 19th century panel concluded with a talk by Anjali Arondekar who examined sexuality and the colonial archive in India by looking at a local legal battle over property rights and tenancy. Arondekar urged us to consider the construction of the colonial archive as a kind of ritual, full of sacred repetitions and (re)collections. She revealed how the archive can recuperate alternative histories or forgotten histories, in particular those of non-normative sexualities, and asked us to consider where the history of sexuality can be located in archives of the colonial period. Arondekar investigated the role of the archive in erasing, creating, and perpetuating certain narratives as well as the possibility of constructing a recuperative hermeneutics vis-à-vis the historiography of sexuality.
In the second panel the conference took a turn toward recent South Asian visual culture. Discussions in this panel underscored the critical juncture at which we stand in our present time regarding practices of collecting and archiving modern and contemporary art. Each panelist, subsequently, sought to address certain modes of contemporary art production and display in the context of South Asia’s recent history of liberation, conflict, and self-development.

The first panelist, Dina Bangdel, investigated the ways in which Newar artists of Nepal—specifically, legendary modern artist Anandyamuni Shakya and contemporary artist Uday Cheran Shrestha—negotiate modernity in the traditional art form and, moreover, reinterpret the notion of tradition in the critical context of contemporary art. She questioned, what is traditional? Are contemporary works produced in the traditional style mere copies? How do we distinguish these works from mass produced prints? Specifically, Bangdel highlighted the use of traditional Newar elements alongside the appropriation of European aesthetics—such as three-dimensionality, chiaroscuro, and musculature and contrapposta in the human form—in Shakya’s works. Further, in the context of new patronage, mass tourism, and globalization, Bangdel demonstrated how the revival of a traditional Newar aesthetic kindled the mass commodification and production of Newar prints in the genre of tourist art, revealing the need to critically assess how tradition is exploited, mobilized, and understood in contemporary cultural practices. The dichotomies of traditional forms versus modernist aesthetics, internationalism versus national ethos, and authenticity versus derivativeness were frequently called into play to evince the slippages and instabilities that go along with reconciling localized modes of traditional painting and contemporary aesthetics.

The second panelist, Karin Zitzewitz, spoke about the artist Gulammohammed Sheikh’s seminal piece Kaavad: Traveling Shrine: Home—a large-scaled, multi-paneled wooden box modeled on traditional portable folk kaavads. Kaavad is comprised of multiple panels that display a mixture of digital prints, quotations, and paintings, which represent various social, cultural, and political narratives of the past and present. Zitzewitz explicated how Kaavad’s broad historical references—from contemporary political upheavals to earlier religious allegories—encourages viewers to call upon their own archive of references—experiences and art historical knowledge—to decode and access the work. Through the folding and unfolding of its doors, Kaavad allows its narratives to be combined, mutated, and rearranged, providing alternative viewing strategies and multiple perspectives of seeing for the viewer. Finally, Dr. Zitzewitz explained that Sheikh alludes to his own dependence of art historians—in other words, his reliance on existing archives of art history—through the inclusion of numerous footnotes with his work.

The contemporary panel concluded with a final talk by Atreyee Gupta, who gave a brief overview of the contemporary art world, delineating the proliferation of new museums, the emergence of global biennales and international exhibitions, the rise of contemporary non-Western art within the global art market, and the surge of community-based art practices. Additionally, Dr. Gupta discussed the rise of exhibitions organized by non-profit organizations—projects that often compete with larger...
In Conversations: Collecting South Asia by the Bay speakers from some of the preeminent organizations for Asian art in the Bay Area, presented highlights from their unique collections and recent gallery shows. Highlighting the contribution of private donor collections, the presentations raised questions about the methods and processes for building and designing collections, as well as the impact private donors can have on institutional holdings.

Panel IV

**Conversations: Collecting South Asia by the Bay**
- Julia White, UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive
- Forrest McGill, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco
- Wendi Norris, Gallery Wendi Norris
- Chair: Sanchita Saxena, University of California, Berkeley

by Padma Maitland

Julia White spoke of the Berkeley Art Museum's collection of South Asian Art, the majority of which is from the Jean and Francis Marshall Collection. Collected over a period of forty years, the collection includes paintings, manuscripts, and ink studies produced between the 17th and 19th centuries in diverse regions in India. The collection has formed the basis of several shows, including the inaugural showing of works from the Marshall Collection, *Deities, Courtiers, and Lovers: Indian Paintings from the Jean and Marshal Collection* curated by Robert J. Del Bonta in 1999 and *Centers of Artistry: Indian Paintings in the Collection*, a show curated by Prof. Emeritus Joanna Williams in fall 2006, to complement *Edge of Desire: Recent Art in India*, an exhibition of contemporary works from India temporarily displayed in the museum at the time. The other holdings of the Berkeley Art Museum are composed of works purchase individually or in smaller batches over time by the museum director, Larry Rinder, and faculty members such as Joanna Williams. Highlighting some of the treasures of the museum's collection, White also discussed the ways students and faculty have been able to engage with museum's holdings over the years, from class visits, to guided tours, and even the curation of shows, as in the case of the recent show, *The Elephant's Eye: Artful Animals of South and South East Asia*, curated by Padma Maitland in partnership with Penelope Edwards and Julia White.

Forrest McGill outlined the Asian Art Museum's superb collection, highlighting its strengths, but also some of its weaknesses, and where he would like the museum to go from here. The AAM has around 1900 objects of which the Avery Brundage Collection (massed in the 40’s to the 60’s and given to the museum in the 1960’s) makes up a significant portion of the South Asian Art collection. The collection is rich in sculpture, with around 70 works from the Gandharan and Pala periods. The museum also has a large collection of South Indian sculpture work. The AAM’s collections were greatly expanded through a donation by William Ehrenfeld, that included 30 works by the renowned Pakistani painter Abdur Rahman Chughtal and over five hundred photographs of 19th century India. Other sub sections of the museum’s holdings include a collection of Mithila Paintings, including a charming image of “Japanese Hippies,” and a special collection of artifacts relate to Sikh art and culture. McGill stressed how much of an impact one donor’s contribution can have on expand-
The conference concluded with the final portion, “The Materiality of the Archive: Viewing the South Asia collection”—a guided discussion on Berkeley Art Museum’s South Asia collection led by UC Berkeley doctoral candidates, Padma Maitland and Cristin McKnight Sethi.

In brief, their talks reflected on overarching issues pertaining to archival and curatorial practices, echoing many of the questions and concerns introduced throughout the day. Indeed, this final panel served as the ideal denouement to the conference for it allowed participants to engage directly with works of art and present their own questions and perceptions regarding the possibilities, limitations, and contradictions of various methodological approaches to curating, collecting, and archiving works of art.

Panel V

The Materiality of the Archive: Viewing the South Asia Collection

- Padma Maitland, PhD Candidate, Architecture and South & Southeast Asian Studies, UC Berkeley
- Cristin McKnight Sethi, Ph.D. Candidate, History of Art Department, UC Berkeley

by Shivani Sood
From early sixteenth-century illustrated Jain manuscripts to a ca. 1720 Sri Lankan text describing medical treatments for pneumonia and typhoid, the University of California, Berkeley libraries have a rich archive of South Asian visual culture. Berkeley's research and collecting interest in South Asia is a long-standing one, dating back at least to 1906, when Sanskrit was first taught here. Among the many resources, the South Asians in North America Collection, formerly known as the Hindustan Ghadar Party collection, is of particular importance. Based in the Bay Area, the Hindustan Ghadar (literally revolution) party was founded by diasporic Indians in the early decades of the twentieth century to initiate an international network of anti-imperial solidarity. Incidentally, many members of the party were also students at Berkeley.

In September 1920, the organization began publishing *Independent Hindustan*, an English-language monthly, with the image of the nation as mother on the cover. Although the image of Mother India was already an established anti-colonial nationalist trope in India from the late nineteenth century onwards, this was the first time the nation as mother was visualized outside British India. The figure's sari, along with long flowing hair, maps out the cartographic contours of the nation. Triumphantly, the figure stands upon a globe on which the outline of India can be clearly discerned. The figure holds in her hands a trumpet labeled Independence. The clarion call for Independence is unambiguous. Proscribed in India by the colonial government as seditious, images such as these are critical sources for understanding the role of visual culture in consolidating diasporic anti-colonial nationalisms. Significantly, the icon of the nation as mother is based on Art Nouveau figuration, reflecting the global ethos within which the image was conceived and circulated.

The collection at Berkeley, the largest on the Ghadar Party in the United States, includes publications from the movement as well as related material from India and Canada. A finding aid to the collection is available online. A comprehensive list of the objects have also been published in Jane Singh et al., eds., *South Asians in North America: An Annotated and Selected Bibliography* (Berkeley: Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies, 1988).
Research in visual studies and art history. This, in turn, provoked a questioning of the conceit of the archive as a panoptical repository of objects and documents. The move towards reading the archive-as-subject (ethnographies of the archive), rather than the archive-as-source (study of objects housed in an archive), leads us to reexamine the archive function in both history and historiography. Our aim in this seminar will thus be twofold:

Through an engagement with key theories on the archive as both a literal and a figural site, we will critically approach questions of marginalities, anxieties, silences, and erasures in the archive of visual studies and art history. How do we recover marginal voices in the archive? How do we read the archive against itself to explore (mis)representations of silence? Can performative bodies, oral histories, and literary texts operate as archive/s for visual studies? Students are expected, indeed encouraged, to think about the theory and praxis of the silent archive/s in relation to their own research.

We will delve into a museum and a private collection of colonial print culture in San Francisco to engage with the practical aspects of archiving. Simultaneously, Skype conversations with museum professionals in New York, Amsterdam, New Delhi, and Hong Kong will allow us to engage with the hermeneutics of the archive in a global field. We will also experience the affective drama of archiving that exceeds all forms of theorizations by participating in the Berkeley South Asian Radical History Walking Tour.

**Invited Speakers**

- Ching-Ling WANG, Curator of Chinese Art, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
- Jodi THROCKMORTON, Curator of Modern & Contemporary Art, Ulrich Museum of Art; Curator of Postdate (San Jose Museum of Art, 2015), an exhibition on contemporary Indian photography.
- Magdalena WROBLEWSKA, Reader, Instytut Historii Sztuki, Uniwersytet Warszawski
- Mohd Ahmad SABIH, Senior Researcher India, Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong

**Course Description**

The 1980s arrival of an archive fever, *le mal d'archive*, saw the development of new methods of fieldwork and research in visual studies and art history. This, in turn, provoked a questioning of the conceit of the archive as a panoptical repository of objects and documents. The move towards reading the archive-as-subject (ethnographies of the archive), rather than the archive-as-source (study of objects housed in an archive), leads us to reexamine the archive function in both history and historiography. Our aim in this seminar will thus be twofold:

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- Mohd Ahmad SABIH, Senior Researcher India, Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong

**Course Description**

South Asia brings to mind conflicting images of the glamour of Bollywood and abject poverty. Yet, this vast geographic terrain has a long history of complex political cultures, multivalent religious ideals, and diverse creative expressions. Our engagement with the visual cultures of Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka from ca. 2500 BCE to the colonial times will allow us to unpack the complexities that constitute South Asia.

Proceeding in a chronological order, we will engage with key moments of artistic production. We will locate visual practices within the larger world of political economies, religion and philosophy, gender and sexuality, urbanity, and state formations.

Tracing intrepid exchanges between Rome and South Asia in the early common era, early modern collaborations between South Asia, Iran, and Turkey, and encounters with Europe fuelled by colonialism, we will also attend to the capacious cultural ambits of global art.

Simultaneously, visits to museums and Hindu temples in Berkeley will allow us to understand South Asian visual culture in the Bay Area. Our aim will be to generate the depth and context required for understanding contemporary South Asia through a historical frame while developing a critical methodology to engage with vision and visuality in an expanded global field.

**Clay icons of Hindu deities, Radha-ballav temple, Kandi, West Bengal**

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— for video recordings of talks, abstracts of papers presented, and speaker information for COLLECTING SOUTH ASIA | ARCHIVING SOUTH ASIA please go to southasia.berkeley.edu/collecting-south-asia

Unknown, India, Asavari Ragini, Courtesy of the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive

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