

## MELISSA R. KERIN, MTS, PHD

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### EDUCATION

- 2001-08 **University of Pennsylvania**, Philadelphia, PA. Ph.D. in the History of Art  
Dissertation: *Re-Tracing Lines of Devotion: Religious Identities and Political Ideologies in 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>-Century Western Himalayan Wall Painting*  
Readers: Professors Michael Meister & Deborah Klimburg-Salter
- 1996- 99 **Harvard Divinity School**, Cambridge, MA. Master of Theological Studies  
World Religions Program with a concentration in Buddhist Studies
- 1990- 94 **Trinity College**, Hartford, CT. Bachelor of Arts  
Women's Studies, graduated with Honors

### PROFESSIONAL

- 2017-present **Associate Professor of Art History**, Washington and Lee University,  
Department of Art and Art History
- 2020-2023 **Program Head of the Middle East and South Asia Program**, Washington and Lee University
- 2011-17 **Assistant Professor of Art History**, Washington and Lee University,  
Department of Art and Art History
- 2009-11 **Visiting Scholar and Assistant Professor**, The College of William and Mary,  
Department of Art and Art History

### RELATED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES (SELECTED 2010- CURRENT)

- 2022 **Examineur**, École Pratique des Hautes Études – PSL, Paris France for the doctoral defence of Nils Martin “The Wanla Group of Monuments: 14<sup>th</sup>-Century Tibetan Buddhist Murals in Ladakh”
- 2018-19 **Guest Researcher**, Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Documentation of Inner and South Asian Cultural History at the University of Vienna (September 2018-February 2019)
- 2017-18 **Co-Curator**, Staniar Gallery of Art, Washington and Lee University: World premiere of “Buddha’s Picnic,” a mixed media installation about Tibetan Buddhist shrines by celebrated Tibetan artist, Gonkar Gyatso.
- 2016-18 **Director of Tibetan Shrine Project**, supported by the University of Virginia’s Tibetan Participatory Culture Initiative. An international, multimedia research project that documents and investigates Buddhist and Bon shrines in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and surrounding areas.
- 2016 **Curriculum Redesign**: The Department chair asked me to restructure the old minor known as Museum Studies. The revised minor is now Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies (CHMS), which relates and responds to current and culturally sensitive issues related to the treatment and acquisition practices of cultural heritage objects.
- 2015 **Exhibition Consultant**, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC: Reinstallation of Buddhist galleries and “The Tibetan Shrine.”

### FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, AND HONORS (SELECTED)

- 2023 **National Endowment for the Arts**, Summer Stipend  
“Turbans and Turquoise: 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Painted Patron Scenes at Basgo’s Chamchung Temple, Ladakh India” <https://securegrants.neh.gov/publicquery/main.aspx?f=1&gn=FT-291886-23>
- 2012-23 **Lenfest Summer Travel Grants**: Awarded for fieldwork projects, archival research, and writing. These summer grants have allowed for continued work in India and Tibet, as well as access to archives in Europe.
- 2018-2019 **Howard Foundation Fellowship in Art History**, Brown University, Providence, RI,  
One of eight fellowships (33,000USD) awarded that year. The fellowship supported work on my upcoming monograph *Bodies of Offerings: Materiality and Vitality of Tibetan Buddhist Shrines*.
- 2017 **The Robert Lehman Foundation**, New York, NY 10,000 USD grant for a collaborative project between Tibetan artist, Gonkar Gyatso and Washington and Lee’s Staniar Gallery. Gyatso’s installation on Tibetan shrines will be premiered at Staniar, February 2018. (I will serve as co-curator).
- 2014-15 **American Council of Learned Societies Fellow**: One-year fellowship to continue research on Tibetan Buddhist shrines in Tibet and the Western Himalayan region.  
For a list of all three ACLS fellowships see: <https://www.acls.org/fellow-grantees/melissa-r-kerin-2/>
- 2013 **VFIC Mednick Fellowship Nominee and Awardee**: Nominated by Dean of the College at Washington and Lee University. Project: *Documentation and Analysis of Tibetan Buddhist Shrines in India’s Western Himalaya*

- 2010 **Edward C. Dimock, Jr. Book Prize in the Indian Humanities:** Awarded by the American Institute of Indian Studies for the best unpublished book manuscript on an Indian subject.
- 2008-09 **Mellon/ACLS Recent Doctoral Recipients Fellowship:** One-year post-doctoral fellowship
- 2007-08 **Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship:** One-year fellowship for finishing the dissertation.
- 2007-08 **University of Pennsylvania School of Arts and Sciences Dissertation Completion Fellowship**
- 2005-06 **University of Pennsylvania William Penn Fellowship:** Fourth year of funding.
- 2004-05 **Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship:** One-year fellowship for dissertation fieldwork and archival research in India and Europe.
- 2004-05 **American Institute of Indian Studies Junior Dissertation Research Fellowship** (declined)
- 2003 **Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship:** Funding for Intensive Intermediate Colloquial Tibetan at the South Asian Summer Language Institute, University of Wisconsin.
- 2001-04 **University of Pennsylvania William Penn Fellowship:** Full four-year funding in pursuit of a Ph.D. in the History of Art (First 3 years).

**PUBLICATIONS (SELECTED)****Books and Edited Volumes**

- In progress *Bodies of Offerings: The Materiality and Vitality of Tibetan Buddhist Shrines*  
The project received two grants: ACLS 2014 and Howard Foundation 2018  
Traditional art historical analysis is paired with votive studies, materiality scholarship, and actor network theory to analyze the construction of Tibetan Buddhist shrines, as well as the intricate relationships that devotees have to shrine sites. Through this integrated approach of object and subject, this book reveals the profound powers and surprising functions of Buddhist shrines in the Western Himalayan region.
- In progress *(Re)Collection and Destruction, Defining new ethical solutions* guest editor for issue of the *International Journal of Cultural Property*, Cambridge University Press.  
Contributions by: Neil Brodie, Chip Colwell, Joy L. Davis, Mark Drumbl, Melissa Kerin, Geoffrey Scarre, Erin Thompson
- 2015 *Art and Devotion at a Buddhist Temple in the Indian Himalaya*, Indiana University Press.  
Recipient of The Edward C. Dimock, Jr. Book Prize in the Indian Humanities
- 2009 *Artful Beneficence: Selections from the David Nalin Collection*. New York: Rubin Museum of Art Publications.

**Articles, Chapters & Reviews**

- 2024 “Mud, Stone, and Brick: Western Himalayan and Tibetan Buddhist Architecture” in *Studies of Asian Art and Culture* Series, Universität Bonn Edited by David Efur
- “Forget Me Not: An Exploration of Pedagogy and How we Teach Painful Pasts”
- “More Than Losing the Lost Cause: Ethical Practices of Remembering” To be published in *The International Journal of Cultural Property*
- “Concerning Birth: A Ladakhi Village and its Avalokiteśvara Shrine”
- “For Real: Amdo Jampa’s Photorealist Paintings”
- “From Triloknāth to Tingmosgang: Mapping Avalokiteśvara Practice through Shrines and Ethnography”
- 2022 Review, Donald S. Lopez’s *Gendun Chopel: Tibet’s First Modern Artist*, Chicago: Serindia Publications, 2013. To be published in *Archives of Asian Art* (by invitation from editor)
- 2021 “Cut, Tuck, and Paste: Repurposing Mass-Produced Imagery at Buddhist Shrines in Ladakh, India” accepted in peer-reviewed journal *Material Religion Journal of Objects, Art, and Belief*. Vol 17, Issue 4.  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17432200.2021.1944795?journalCode=rfmr20>
- 2021 Review, Diana Lang’s *An Atlas of the Himalayas by a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Tibetan Lama: A Journey of Discovery* Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020 published in *Journal of Asian Studies* 80 (1), 176-178. (by invitation from editor)

- 2016 “Post Fifteenth-Century Wall Paintings of Nako’s Religious Compound,” in *Nako*, edited by Lisa Gräber, Vienna: Böhlau Verlag Wien Köln
- “De-centering *The Survey: Multi-Regional Surveys in Art History*,” in the *Journal of Art History Pedagogy and Practice* by Melissa Kerin and Andrea Lepage
- 2015 “From Emulation to Interpretation: Trends in the Late Medieval Ngari Painting Tradition,” in *Collecting Paradise: Buddhist Art of Kashmir and Its Legacies*, edited by Rob Linrothe with Contributions by Melissa R. Kerin and Christian Luczanits, New York: Rubin Museum of Art.
- “Recollecting Kashmir in Style and Theme: The Cleveland Museum of Art’s Painting of the 11-headed 1000-Armed Avalokiteshvara,” in *Orientalism* Vol 46, no. 1: 2-10, by Melissa R. Kerin and Rob Linrothe
- 2014 “Tibet Field Report July 2014: Devotional Imagery at Buddhist Shrines,” in *Orientalism* 45, no. 8: 115-118, with Victoria Andrews and Betsy Cribb.
- 2013 “Materiality of Devotion: Tibetan Buddhist Shrines of the Western Himalaya” in *Art of Merit: Studies in Buddhist Art and its Conservation*, edited by David Park and Kuenga Wangmo (London: Archetype Publications).
- 2010 “Visual Evidence of ’Bri-Gung Activity in Nako, Kinnaur,” in *Proceedings of the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies, Bonn, 2006*, edited by Erberto Lobue and Christian Luczanits (Leiden: Brill).
- 2007 “Little-Known Late-12<sup>th</sup>-Century Wall Paintings in Ladakh’s Markha Valley.” *Orientalism* 38, no. 4: 54-59.

#### CONFERENCES, SYMPOSIA & LECTURES

- 2024 **Participant** India International Centre’s Conference: Asia on the Move: Histories of Mobility and the Making of Asia, New Delhi India (February)  
Paper title: “For Real: Amdo Jampa and Pan-Asian Realisms”
- 2023 **Keynote Speaker**, William and Mary College, Art History Colloquium  
“*Social Networks of Shrines: Some Notes on Tibetan Buddhist Shrines in Diaspora*” (April)
- Speaker** Eighth International Conference on Tibetan Archaeology & Arts  
Hangzhou, China (November)
- Lecturer** Jnanapravaha Mumbai Postgraduate Course on Indian Temples, India  
“Mud, Stone, and Brick: Western Himalayan and Tibetan Buddhist Architecture” (November)
- 2022 **Graduate Student Workshop**, Northwestern University and University of Illinois at Chicago (Professors Sara Jacoby and Catherine Becker). Using current research on Buddhist fertility sites in India’s Western Himalayan region, I will discuss how research questions determine methodological approaches, such as textual, ethnographic, and/or visual analysis.
- Public Lecture for Myers Foundation Event**, Northwestern University: “More Than Losing the Lost Cause: Ethical Practices of Remembering”
- Zoom Lecture**, St. Lawrence University, Art History Department (Professor Chandreyi Basu’s Buddhist Art seminar): “Mass-produced Offerings at Buddhist Shrines in the Western Himalayan Region”
- Lecture**, University of Michigan, History of Art Department (Professor Nachiket Chanchani’s Himalayan art graduate seminar) “The Double Lives of Buddhist Shrines in the Western Himalayan Region”
- Panel Convener**, College Arts Association: “Altared States” (Cancelled due to two participants dropping out)

- 2021 **Panel Co-Convener** “Art, Ritual, and Text at Shrines in South Asia: A cross-disciplinary and diachronic investigation of the forms and functions of shrines” 26<sup>th</sup> European Conference on South Asian Studies, Vienna, Austria 27-28July. Virtual panel. Moderated a panel of 13 scholars from India, countries in Europe, the U.S. and Mexico.
- Presented**, “Concerning Birth: A Ladahi Village and its Avalokiteśvara Shrine,” presented as part of the “Art, Ritual, and Text at Shrines in South Asia: A cross-disciplinary and diachronic investigation of the forms and functions of shrines” Panel at the 26<sup>th</sup> European Conference on South Asian Studies, Vienna, Austria, 27-28July.
- 2020 (Canceled due to Covid-19) Panel Co-Convener “Art, Ritual, and Text at Shrines in South Asia: A cross-disciplinary and diachronic investigation of the forms and functions of shrines” Panel accepted for the 26<sup>th</sup> European Conference on South Asian Studies, Vienna, Austria 29July-1August
- (Canceled due to Covid-19) “Conception and Reincarnation: Powers of a Buddhist Shrine in Ladakh, India”, European Conference on South Asian Studies, Vienna (August)
- (Canceled due to Covid-19) Invited Lecture “Avalokiteśvara and Fertility Shrines of Ladakh” Tibetan Studies Department, The Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany.
- 2019 “Tibetan Buddhist Shrines as Heterotopic Spaces, an Interdisciplinary Methodology” presented at the International Association of Tibetan Studies, Paris, July 2019
- Organized talk and workshop: *Recently Discovered c. 11<sup>th</sup>-Century Tibetan Manuscripts*  
Talk by Dr. Toni Huber, Professor of Tibetan Studies at the Humboldt University, Berlin (May)
- “Gonkar Gyatso’s ‘Insta-Shrine’ and the Role of Mechanical Reproduction”  
presented at St. Joseph’s University, Philadelphia, PA (March)
- “Shrines in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Reflections on Gonkar Gyatso’s Buddha’s Picnic”  
presented at the Institute for South Asian, Tibetan, and Buddhist Studies, University of Vienna (January)
- 2018 “Shrines as Heterotopic Spaces: Documentation and Digitation”  
presented at Technical University, Architecture Department, Graz (December)
- “Notes on Practices of Protecting and Repatriating Nepal’s Cultural Heritage Since 2015”  
Invited paper at International Symposium after the Earthquake: Research, Protection, and Preservation of Nepal’s Cultural Heritage presented at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna (November)
- “A Conversation with Gonkar Gyatso” A discussion related to his most recent installation, *Buddha’s Picnic* showcased at Staniar Gallery Hosted by Asia Society, NYC (March)  
Virtual participation due to canceled flight. Moderator Katie Paul (Newark Museum)  
<https://asiasociety.org/new-york/events/conversation-contemporary-tibetan-artist-gonkar-gyatso>
- “Buddha’s Picnic: A Conversation between Gonkar Gyatso and Melissa R. Kerin about Shrines”  
Hosted by the Freer and Sackler Galleries, Smithsonian, Washington, D.C. (February)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwwEsuhiW5A&feature=youtu.be>
- “Buddha’s Picnic, a discussion with collaborators Gobkar Gyatso and Melissa R. Kerin,”  
Hosted by Washington and Lee University (February).
- 2017 “The Ethics of Acquiring Cultural Heritage Objects,” Co-organizer with Dr. Angela Smith  
Hosted through the Mudd Center of Ethics at Washington and Lee University  
International conference brought together leading figures on the ethical treatment of cultural heritage objects. (March) <https://my.wlu.edu/mudd-center/programs-and-events/2016-2017-markets-and-morals/conference-on-the-ethics-of-acquiring-cultural-heritage-objects>

- 2016 “Ontology of Tibetan Buddhist Shrines” Workshop with Tibetologists and Art Historians at the University of Vienna (March)
- 2015 “Collecting and Presenting Tibetan Material Culture” Presenter and commentator  
Part of the *Museums and Material Culture: East Asia* year-long series of lectures at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University (May)
- 2014 “Decoding Devotional Photographs: Their Subject Matter, Material, Circulation, and Re/uses at Tibetan Buddhist Shrines in Ladakh,” Invited Panelist for *Beyond Documentation: Photography in the Field* (Convener Rob Linrothe, Northwestern University), Third Himalayan Studies Conference of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies, Yale University, New Haven, CT. (March)
- “Decoding Devotional Photographs at Tibetan Buddhist Shrines in Ladakh” Presenter at Washington and Lee’s Culture and Society Colloquium (March)
- “Snipped, Tucked, Hidden: Devotional Photographs at Tibetan Buddhist Shrines” presenter at Chakshudana: Conversations on South Asian Art Celebrating Michael W. Meister, University of Pennsylvania (April)
- 2013 “Omissions and Revisions: The vexed role of mass-produced media in Tibetan Buddhist Shrines,” *Panelist*, College Art Association, 101<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference, New York, NY. (February)
- 2012 “Making Palaces of Sand: Tibetan Buddhist Nuns as Sacred Artists,” Evening talk for the W&L and Rockbridge Communities, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA (November)
- 2012 “Tradition Changing Women, Women Changing Tradition: The interface of Tibetan nuns and the sacred art of sand mandala making,” *Keynote Speaker*, Trinity College, Hartford, CT (September)
- “Dislocation: A symposium on the ever-shifting concepts of place, belonging, and identity,” *Co-Organizer* with Andrea Lepage and Presenter, Winter College Symposium, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA (Winter term)
- “More Than What It Seems: Understanding Collection & Display Practices in a Western Himalayan Buddhist Shrine” *Invited Speaker*, Buddhist Art Forum at the Courtauld Institute of Arts, London, UK (April)
- “Hidden in Plain Sight: Western Himalayan Wall Paintings of the Buddha’s Life” *Panelist* for “Refiguring the Buddha in Tibet,” Association of Asian Studies Conference, Toronto, CA (March)
- 2011 “What’s in a Name: Reconsidering Tibetan Stylistic Taxonomies.” *Co-Chair* with Rob Linrothe, College Art Association 99<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, New York, NY
- 2010 “Reframing Borders: Analysis and Interpretation of Himalayan Textile Frames,” *Panelist*, College Art Association 98<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, Chicago, IL
- 2009 “Interpretations of a Tibetan Buddhist Temple: An Art Historical and Ethnographic Analysis.” *Invited Lecturer*, Weedon Lecture Series, University of Virginia
- “From a ’Bri gung past to a ’Brug pa Present, Tracing Lines of Devotion at Nako’s Rgya ’phags pa Temple.” *Invited Lecturer*, University of Vienna, Austria
- “Forgetting to Remember: The Plight of Tibetan Buddhist Lineage Programs,” *Panelist*, American Council for Southern Asian Art Symposium XIV, Denison University & Ohio State University
- 2007 “Re-visioning a Buddhist Temple,” Symposium on the History of Art, The Institute of Fine Arts, New York University and The Frick Collection, New York City, NY
- 2006 “Visual Evidence of ’Bri-Gung Activity in Nako, Kinnaur,” *Panelist*, International Association of Tibetan Studies, Bonn, Germany
- “Myths and Realities of Tibetan Buddhist Art,” *Invited Lecturer*, University of Buffalo

- 2005 “New Evidence for the Spiti Valley Painting Tradition,” *Presenter*, American Council for Southern Asian Art Symposium XII, San Diego Museum of Art
- 2005 “Stylistic & Iconographic Findings at Nako’s rGya ’phags pa Temple,” *Presenter*, Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Conference, Kochin, India

**COURSES OFFERED AT WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY**

All of the following are 3-credit courses and count toward Art and Art History.

Some courses also satisfy requirements for the MESA (Middle East and South Asian Studies) program

Levels: 100 is primarily lecture; 200 is advanced lecture with discussion; 300 is seminar

ARTH 140	Introduction to Asian Art
ARTH 141/MESA	Buddhist Art of Central and South Asia
ARTH 146/MESA	Questions of Ownership: Looting, Destroying, and Curating Cultural Heritage Objects
ARTH 240	Arts of China
ARTH 242/MESA	Arts of India
ARTH 243/MESA	Imaging Tibet ( <b>cross-listed</b> with Anthropology)
ARTH 245/MESA	Modern & Contemporary Asian Art
ARTH 343/MESA	Love, Loyalty, and Lordship: India’s Art of Hindu and Islamic Courts 1500s–1800s
ARTH 343/MESA	Art and Material Culture of Tibet and the Indian Himalaya
ARTH 347	Forget Me Not: Visual Culture of Secular and Religious Memorials
ARTH 395	Approaches to Art History

**SERVICE AND COMMITTEE WORK**

2020-2023	Program Head, Middle East and South Asian Studies Program
2022-23	Invited Member to the Dean’s Cohort on W&L’s Institutional History
2020-22	Faculty Representative to the Board of Trustees at Washington and Lee University
2019-22	Digital Humanities Committee
2017-18	Invited to serve on the President’s Commission on Institutional History and Community As a member of this 12-person commission, I worked collaboratively to examine how W&L teaches and physically represents its history.
2017-18	Graduate Fellowships Committee
2013-current	Committee Member of the I-Hsiung Ju and Chow-Soon Chuange Ju Endowment for Traiditon Chinese Art Studies

**ACADEMIC MEMBERSHIP**

College Art Association  
International Association of Tibetan Studies  
American Council of Southern Asia Arts  
Association of Asian Studies  
European Association on South Asian Studies