

[Exhibition: "Dharma and Punya: Buddhist Ritual Art of Nepal" at Holy Cross College in Massachusetts](#)

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Type:

Event

Date:

September 12, 2019 to December 14, 2019

Location:

Massachusetts, United States

Subject Fields:

Anthropology, Asian History / Studies, Religious Studies and Theology, South Asian History / Studies, Art, Art History & Visual Studies

This exhibition highlights Nepal's artistic heritage as a rich and enduring continuation of Indic Buddhist traditions and features paintings, illustrated texts, sculptures, and ritual implements on loan from major institutions (MFA, Met, Cleveland Museum of Art, Virginia Fine Arts Museum, Harvard) that were crafted by Newar artisans over the last millennium. "*Dharma and Punya: Buddhist Ritual Art of Nepal*" is centered on how the Buddha's teachings - in Nepal and elsewhere - were arrayed as much for worldly householders as virtuoso thinker and seekers.

Illustrating the centrality of ritual in Buddhism, visual narratives show common practices every devotee needed to know to make good karma (*punya*), a central tenet of the Buddha's teaching (*dharma*). With some objects never before displayed in the West (a Buddhist "sacred thread", for example), this historic exhibition will focus on the unparalleled contributions of Kathmandu Valley artisans and patrons not only in their communities, but in the subsequent development of Tibetan art.

The show features mundane objects essential to daily Buddhist life; it also displays an astonishingly rich array of palm leaf and paper manuscript folios decorated with the very refined miniature paintings. There is also on display a masterpiece of Newar art never shown before in the West: a 23' long x 3' high banner painting (*bilampau*) depicting the Buddhist origin myth of the Kathmandu Valley and the *Manicuda Avadana*.

To provide depth and insight to the art shown in the gallery, the show includes three additional features. (Complete details are on the web page.)

1. Ritual Events. The gallery will host five events in which the public can witness, and participate in, Newar Buddhist rituals performed by the *vajracarya* master and scholar, Naresh Man Bajracharya. This include the making of a sand mandala, the consecration of Buddhism images; a narrative storytelling session, and two vratas, the first dedicated to making clay *caityas* and the second worshipping the goddess Vasundhara.

2. Documentary Videos. On the "*Dharma and Punya*" web site (and in the gallery), there are twenty-six short videos that show: artisans making the major art forms (*paubha and ritual* paintings, lost wax

and repousse statues, stone images, prayer wheels and flags, wooden temple struts); the rituals that are depicted in paintings; priests and householders using the items (vajra, monastic gong, vajracarya crown, Bhairava mask, etc.) that are displayed; forms of Newar Buddhist devotional music.

3. Lecture Series. Distinguished experts will visit Holy Cross to provide context and detail on the contents of the exhibition. These include talks by the co-curators, and scholars: Sonali Dhingra, John Guy, Louis Copplestone, Alexander von Rospatt, Gudrun Bühnemann, Gautama Vajracharya, Bruce Owens, and Holland Cotter. Details and specifics on these lectures are also listed on the web site.

All are welcome. Please contact the curators regarding getting to Holy Cross, a liberal arts college in Worcester Massachusetts. (It is a 50 minute drive west of Boston.)

Contact Info:

Co-Curator Todd Lewis tlewis@holycross.edu

Co-Curator Jinah Kim jinahkim@fas.harvard.edu

Contact Email:

tlewis@holycross.edu

URL:

<https://dharmapunya2019.org>