



TRACE

**ARTISANAL INTELLIGENCE, MATERIAL
AGENCY, AND RITUAL TECHNOLOGY IN
SOUTH ASIAN ART**

**DECEMBER 7-8, 2018
BARKER CENTER, HARVARD UNIVERSITY**

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ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM

The 'material turn' in art history opened new avenues for research with fresh approaches that shift our attention from considering an object as a static thing in an absolute state to putting more emphasis on the process of making and its use and reuse. A chipped area in a miniature painting is no longer an unfortunate loss but a site of excavation for information about material conditions of production and use, while unfinished surface in a stone sculpture provides a laboratory to explore artisans' hands at work.

This symposium brings together scholars whose research embraces methodological interventions and theoretical implications of art history's material turn in the field of South Asian art and architecture, mostly focusing on the period between 500 CE and 1500CE. Thematically organized, papers demonstrate how attending to thingness and the process of making helps reveal hitherto invisible connections across time and space. Going beyond the rubric of material agency, papers also explore the importance of considering somatic intelligence and ritual technology that developed to activate power and sacrality of objects and buildings in Indic religious contexts. Further consideration of ritual knowledge helps situate the trace of time left in matter through artistic mediations in historical and experiential

WELCOME

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Welcome to the TRACE symposium at Harvard. Organized around the rubric of “Artisanal Intelligence, Material Agency, and Ritual Technology in South Asian art,” this symposium brings together a number of scholars working on South Asia who share deep interests in artistic processes and material properties in their research. It aims to provide an opportunity to contemplate on methodological implications of art history’s material turn with specific case studies from South Asia.

This symposium is possible through the generous support of the Department of History of Art & Architecture (HAA, Harvard), The Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute (LMSAI, Harvard) and the Harvard Art Museums. I would like to thank my departmental colleagues, David J. Roxburgh, Yukio Lippit, and Eugene Wang for their enthusiastic support of my symposium proposal. I would also like to thank Catherine Becker (University of Illinois, Chicago) for helping me develop the proposal. Thanks must be paid to Lily Alfonzo (HAA), Louis Copplestone (HAA), Meena Hewett (LMSAI), and Neha Joseph (LMSAI) for their logistical and administrative help. In addition to answering endless queries from me, Lily also designed the poster for the keynote lecture. Neha designed the symposium program.

Lastly, I thank the speakers and the chairs for their willing participation. Thank you all for coming.

Let the symposium be filled with productive conversations and collegial spirits.

Jinah Kim
Symposium Organizer
Gardner Cowles Associate Professor of History of Art and Architecture, Harvard University

SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM

DAY 1 | FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7

Keynote Lecture

1:00 - 3:00 pm	Art Study Center Session (symposium presenters only) Harvard Art Museums, Art Study Center
5:00 - 6:30 pm	Keynote lecture Emerson Hall 210 Welcome by David Roxburgh (Department Chair, History of Art + Architecture at Harvard) "Did Time Run Out? Hammer, Chisel, & the Unfinished at rock-cut Ellora & built Halebid" - Vidya Dehejia, Barbara Stoler Miller Professor of Indian and South Asian Art, Columbia University
6:30 - 8:00 pm	Reception

DAY 2 | SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8

Symposium, Thompson Room, Barker Center

8:00 - 8:30 am	Coffee and Pastries
8:30 - 8:45 am	Welcome and Introduction by Jinah Kim (Harvard University)
8:45 - 10:25 am	Panel #1: Rock and Reuse Chair: Vidya Dehejia (Columbia University) Lisa Owen (University of North Texas), "Carving as an Additive Process—How Southern Indian Rock-Reliefs Make Meaning" Sonali Dhingra (Harvard University), "Making and Marring "khondolite" sculptures in Odisha" Katherine Kasdorf (Detroit Institute of Art), "A Monument Transformed—Traces of Ruin, Restoration, and Choice in Halebidu's Kedāreśvara Temple"
10:25-10:45 am	Coffee/Tea Break

SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM

10:45 - 12:25 pm	<p>Panel #2: Architectural and Artistic Traces of New Ritual Technology in early medieval South Asia</p> <p>Chair: Michael Meister (University of Pennsylvania)</p> <p>Padma Kaimal (Colgate University), "Reading ancient ritual and thought through material evidence"</p> <p>Abhishek Amar (Hamilton College), "Rematerialization and History-Making in the Magadha Region"</p> <p>Tamara Sears (Rutgers University), "Absent Remains: The Conundrum of Cremation and the (Im)materiality of Death"</p>
12:25 - 1:30 pm	Lunch Break
1:30 - 3:10 pm	<p>Panel #3: Artisanal Intelligence and Trans-regional Connections</p> <p>Chair: Deborah Klimburg-Salter (University of Vienna/Harvard)</p> <p>Pia Brancaccio (Drexel University), "Artistic intelligence, carving technologies and cross-cultural exchange in Gandhara: Sculpture from Gumbat, Saidu Sharif and Panr in the Swat valley, Pakistan"</p> <p>Nachiket Chanchani (University of Michigan), "As Many Pebbles, So Many Shivas"</p> <p>Janice Leoshko (UT Austin), "Meaning in the Making: the Evidence of Sri Lankan Buddhist Bronzes"</p>
3:10 - 3:30 pm	Coffee/Tea Break
3:30 - 5:10 pm	<p>Panel #4: Painting and Pigment</p> <p>Chair: Laura Weinstein (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)</p> <p>Jinah Kim (Harvard University), "Learning from color: pigments and artistic interventions in Indic manuscript painting"</p> <p>Katherine Eremin (Straus Center Harvard Art Museums), "Materials and Techniques of Indian Manuscripts"</p> <p>Anna Seastrand (University of Minnesota), "The Palpable Painting"</p>
5:10 - 5:30 pm	Concluding remarks
6:30-7:30 pm	Symposium dinner (participants only)

KEYNOTE LECTURE

"DID TIME RUN OUT? HAMMER, CHISEL, & THE UNFINISHED AT ROCK-CUT ELLORA & BUILT HALEBID"

Vidya Dehejia

Barbara Stoler Miller Professor of Indian and South Asian Art, Columbia University

How often can we get away by explaining unfinished monuments as a result of dynastic collapse, a shortage of funds, or the death of a patron? In this illustrated talk, Vidya Dehejia provides a refreshing and unusual glimpse into unfinished monuments on the Indian subcontinent, suggesting two alternate ways of understanding several examples of unfinished work. One explanation lies in the somewhat casual attitude of patrons and devotees towards the concept of "finish," while a second answer lies in technique and "the rhythm of construction."



Chota Kailasa, Jain Cave 30, Ellora. Photo: Vidya Dehejia

ABSTRACTS

PANEL #1

ROCK AND REUSE

"Carving as an Additive Process? How Southern Indian Rock-Reliefs Make Meaning"

Lisa N. Owen (University of North Texas)

A number of early medieval sites across southern India exhibit not only structural and rock-cut temples, but also relief carvings of deities incised into neighboring rock faces or natural boulders. These carvings—or "rock-reliefs"—create a power of place and contribute to a site's sacred landscape. While my current work on rock-reliefs explores how these carvings might function in devotional practices, for this symposium I want to investigate how they make meaning as relief carvings. My paper will focus on a series of rock-reliefs carved on a single, colossal boulder at the site of Badami. The rock-reliefs on this boulder present a layering of imagery—forms carved over earlier forms. As such, the subtractive process can be thought of as an additive one. The superimposition of imagery not only assists us in understanding creative processes, but invites us to consider how meaning might be made through their collective traces.

"Making and Marring "khondolite" sculptures in Odisha"

Sonali Dhingra (Harvard University)

Outsized Buddhist sculpture from Odisha, dating to the late first millennium, presents a graphic case of material agency and artistic necessity. Carved in "khondolite", a brown "gneiss", tall and deeply carved Bodhisattva steles belie a close relationship between form and medium. Architectural elements and sculptures were made using this abundantly available rock during the medieval period at major Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples in Odisha.

The rock itself, with a large and disparate grain, a coarse and rough texture, leaves much to desire for sculptors. But then, as now, stone-workers from Odisha work organically with this material. On the basis of unfinished examples found on site and contemporary workshop practices, this paper will examine the abilities of artists to effectively adapt to their needs and create cultic icons with presence and potency. Furthermore, the reengagements with over-life sized sculpture through time point to the affective nature of monumental things around us.

"A Monument Transformed—Traces of Ruin, Restoration, and Choice in Halebīḍu's Kedāreśvara Temple"

Katherine E. Kasdorf (Detroit Institute of Arts)

The Kedāreśvara temple in Halebīḍu, Karnataka, is a materially different building today than it was in the early thirteenth century, when members of the Hoysala dynasty sponsored its construction. By 1854, a tree growing from the temple had dislodged numerous blocks from the structure's sculpture-covered walls, and in the ensuing decades the building was radically transformed by both natural and human forces. While some of the temple's sculptural building blocks were collected as works of art in their own right, others were rebuilt into the temple's walls—alongside materials from a different ruin—in a controversial early-twentieth-century restoration. Examining the changes made to the building during this period, I view such alterations as traces of different, sometimes conflicting, priorities. Rather than lamenting the loss of an imagined original, I consider what the Kedāreśvara temple as it stands today reveals about the choices of those who rebuilt it.

ABSTRACTS

PANEL #2

ARCHITECTURAL AND ARTISTIC TRACES OF NEW RITUAL TECHNOLOGY IN EARLY MEDIEVAL SOUTH ASIA

"Reading ancient ritual and thought through material evidence"

Padma Kaimal (Colgate College)

Many stories unfold around the towered shrine built by the Pallava king Rājasiṃha at the heart of the Kailasanatha temple complex in the early eighth century. A poem inscribed into the building's stone foundation tells one story about kings. Large sculptures on the walls above that poem tell other stories about deities. Together those inscribed and sculpted stories tell yet another story, a story available only to people initiated into a Tantric form of knowledge. These words and images are fundamentally different things. The inscription is not a caption for the sculptures, nor do the sculptures illustrate the text. Neither is subordinate to the other, neither is less true or less clever, nor are words and images in some kind of binary opposition to each other. Rather, the two media periodically peel apart and wrap back together, picking out separate but coordinated rhythmic steps.

"Rematerialization and History-Making in the Magadha Region"

Abhishek Singh Amar (Hamilton College)

Apart from the sites of Bodhgaya and Gaya, several villages of the Gaya district of South Bihar/Magadha region have mounds, sculptures, and architectural remains from the premodern period. Many of these remains have lost their original/historical context, though they continue to be used ritually in resituated socio-religious contexts. Through a study of early medieval sculptures and temples at the sites of Kespa and Main, this paper will investigate the historic context of their production and ritual usages while simultaneously evaluating the different ways in which local communities have reused and interpreted these 'materials from the past' to produce new histories. It will specifically examine interpretive strategies of the local communities that rely on the 'Buddhist' and 'Hindu' histories of the region to emphasize connections across time and space. The paper demonstrates how local communities have actively rematerialized to not merely preserve these remains, but also produce multiple pasts that are in circulation locally and beginning to become authoritative historical accounts at the state level.

"Absent Remains: The Conundrum of Cremation and the (Im)materiality of Death"

Tamara I. Sears (Rutgers University)

In the opening to *The Archaeology of Death and Burial* (2000), Michael Parker Pearson describes the conundrum of cremation, which could be "outrageously extravagant affairs" that nonetheless "leave few or even no archaeological traces." The exceptions were cases in which the charred bones were buried or cremation sites preserved under the accumulation of later deposits or mounds. In medieval India, neither was the case. Corpses were quickly carried to the charnel, ritually burned, and deposited in nearby rivers. Despite the absence of bodily traces, funerals were deeply material affairs, requiring a variety of ritual substances and distinctly demarcated spaces to protect against ghosts seeking to harm the corpse and disrupt rites of passing. Combining close analysis of architecture, sculpture, landscape, and literary sources, this presentation traces the contours of cremation grounds in medieval central India and reimagines the materiality of death and its associated cultural practices.

ABSTRACTS

PANEL #3

ARTISINAL INTELLIGENCE AND TRANS-REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

"Artistic intelligence, carving technologies and cross-cultural exchange in Gandhara: Sculpture from Gumbat, Saidu Sharif and Panr in the Swat valley, Pakistan"
Pia Brancaccio (Drexel University)

The proposed paper focuses on a series of sculptural friezes once associated with minor Buddhist monuments from the sites of Gumbat, Saidu Sharif and Panr in Swat, Pakistan. Barger and Wright in 1938 and later the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan between 1966 and 2012 excavated these monuments and consigned the schist sculptures respectively to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Museo Nazionale di Arte Orientale G. Tucci in Rome and the Swat Museum in Saidu Sharif. A thorough analysis of the artistic choices and carving technologies, in particular the use of drill, distinctive of this body of material will highlight how artisanal intelligence and cross cultural exchange were profoundly connected in the sculptural production of the Swat valley around the 2nd c. CE.

"As Many Pebbles, So Many Shivas"
Nachiket Chanchani (University of Michigan)

This talk postulates that Lakhamandal village is a crucial site for understanding how artisanal intelligence, material agency, ritual technology, and transregional connections contributed to the emergence of the Himalayas as a sacred landscape. Located near an intersection of the Uttarapatha route and the Yamuna River in the Himalayas, Lakhamandal attracted individuals from diverse lands as early as the second century CE. Some brought lingas with them. Eventually, the village drew sculptors equally interested in how objects were made and what they meant. Encouraged by ritual specialists and supported by sovereigns, they shaped scores of lingas and edifices. Alongside they explored properties of rocks, studied effects of water on various surfaces, gauged potentials of chiseling and construction techniques, played with notions of finish and created engaging, even transformative experiences. In their zealous melding of materials and messages, these sculptors extended and deepened the efforts of agents who were active elsewhere and were trying to institutionalize Shaivism. These agents were classifying lingas, listing their locations, weaving myths into lucid narratives, and amalgamating doctrines. Cumulatively, these groups carved out a landscape where there were as many Shivas as pebbles ("jitne kankar utne shankar").

"Meaning in the Making: the Evidence of Sri Lankan Buddhist Bronzes"
Janice Leoshko (University of Texas at Austin)

Ever since Ananda Coomaraswamy's early studies, Sri Lanka's metal images are most frequently discussed in terms of their subject and/or style. Fueling such efforts has been considerable interest in two issues: detecting South Indian artistic influence and defining Mahāyāna practice in an avowedly Theravāda environment. This paper asks, what has such scrutiny obscured? How can we explore the intersection of material form with the demonstration of important image-making? What might be highlighted by the use of bronze and other choices made in the creation of specific forms?

The focus here is upon sculptures of bodhisattvas believed to date between the seventh and twelfth centuries. One aspect of this investigation is the possible meaning in the lack of certain elements for which interesting evidence is offered by the presence of eastern Indian Buddhist bronzes found in Sri Lanka.

ABSTRACTS

PANEL #4

PAINTINGS AND PIGMENTS

"Learning from color: pigments and artistic interventions in Indic manuscript painting"

Jinah Kim (Harvard University)

How green is "Green Tara" in a Buddhist master's vision? If color perception is subjective, how did color information circulate in premodern South Asia? Since when Kṛṣṇa is blue, Amitābha red? And why? What roles did artists play in translating inner visions into painting? This paper explores how ritual practices and artistic interventions may have contributed to the propensity for primary colors in Indic painting traditions. While it is difficult to construe unnamed artists' intentions, identification of pigments can afford us a glimpse into artists' intimate embodied knowledge of color when read together with other art historical and textual evidence. The pigment data drawn from scientific material analyses conducted at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and at the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Art history (Harvard), and careful examination of each miniature's formal and physical properties help improve our historical understanding of color and artisanal intelligence.

"Materials and Techniques of Indian Manuscripts"

Katherine Eremin and Penley Knipe (Harvard Art Museums)

Technical examination of Indian manuscripts and paintings by scientists and conservators at the Harvard Art Museums is on-going to identify the materials used and the ways in which these were applied. Combined with art historical study of the art works, this increases our understanding of the geographical and chronological ranges for the use of different pigments over the Indian sub-continent. Knowledge of the available palette can indicate the extent to which pigment selection for individual art works depends on artistic choice versus availability and inform our understanding of the working practices of the individual artists or workshops. The roles of local or traditional versus imported or new pigments and fluctuations in these can be examined and related to trade between India and Europe from the 17th century onwards.

"The Palpable Painting"

Anna Lise Seastrand (University of Minnesota - Twin Cities)

Over the years I've presented on South Indian temple murals, interlocutors have suggested that No one would really look them. And they say this with good reason: After all, the South Indian temple is a place where ritual focus is directed to sculpture, not painting. And paintings are often located in places that challenge their visibility. I've come to see such a strong critique of my interest in murals (no one sees them anyway) as one of the most important I've received.

In fact, people don't look at paintings in the ways we expect: models of contemplative viewing from the West, or of darśanic vision from India, are both inadequate to the paintings, their visibility, and the ways in which people interact with them. This paper will argue that mural paintings are tactile, appreciated through touch and through movement; they are not removed from the body but meaningful only in relation to it. Not an immaterial remove, but a palpable presence, the knowledge they convey is somatic in both content and form.

HARVARD ART MUSEUM HIGHLIGHTS

The Harvard Art Museum has several exhibitions that may be of interest to Trace Symposium attendees. The museums are located on the Harvard campus at 32 Quincy Street, and are open to the public 10am - 5pm.

Buddhist Sculpture: Buddhism and Early East Asian Buddhist Art showcases the Museums' collection of Chinese and Korean Buddhist sculpture from the collection of Grenville L. Winthrop. The gallery contains a number of Buddhist sculptures from South Asia. This collection is on view in room 1260, first floor.

This semester's rotation of the **South Asia in the Medieval and Early Modern Eras** features selections from the museums' wide-ranging collection of South Asian art on two themes. **Images of the Hunt in South Asia** looks at the dangers and risks of the hunt in two seventeenth-century paintings and **Nayikas: Heroines of Love** brings together a number of eighteenth-century paintings from Kangra on that theme. On view in room 2590, second floor.

The Efflorescence of East Asian and Buddhist Art showcases the breadth of Museum's collection of Buddhist art in painting and sculpture. The hand of a colossal Amida Buddha from Japan, attributed to Kaikei (13th century), and a number of Tibetan cloth paintings are currently on display. On view in room 2740, second floor.

Animal-Shaped Vessels from the Ancient World: Feasting with Gods, Heroes, and Kings brings together nearly sixty elaborate vessels of animal shape from collections in the United States and Europe to introduce the social and ceremonial functions of the ritual occasions in which they were used; highlighting the essential and universal role played by food and drink and the imaginative containers used to enjoy these refreshments. On view in the Special Exhibitions Gallery, room 3500, third floor.

Mutiny: Works by Géricault explores compelling images by the Romantic period's most influential artist, Théodore Géricault (1791–1824). The approximately forty drawings, watercolors, lithographs, and paintings from the Harvard Art Museums collections, augmented by loans from three Boston-area collectors, tell a new story of this socially and politically engaged artist across a range of media. On view in the University Research Gallery, room 3600, third floor.

Adam and Eve complements a course in the History of Art Department taught by Joseph Koerner, Victor S. Thomas Professor of the History of Art and Architecture; and Stephen Greenblatt, John Cogan University Professor of the Humanities, Harvard University. Including works by Dürer, Rembrandt, Blake, Munch, and Beckmann, this installation is both the history of an image - Adam and Eve - and a miniature history of Western art. On view in the University Teaching Gallery, room 3610, third floor.

Jace Clayton, The Great Salt is a digital response - a sonic extension and intervention - to the narrative of a work of silver that arrived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1638, The Great Salt (itself on display in Gallery 2340, second floor). Approximately forty electronic synthesizer modules are connected with multicolored cables and programmed using granular synthesis to perform a new work—a composition designed by Clayton to self-modulate, actively generating new sounds and changing as it repeats. On view in the Lightbox Gallery, room 5000, fifth floor.

Symposium attendees can access Harvard's wifi network with the following steps:

Open a browser and go to <https://getonline.harvard.edu>

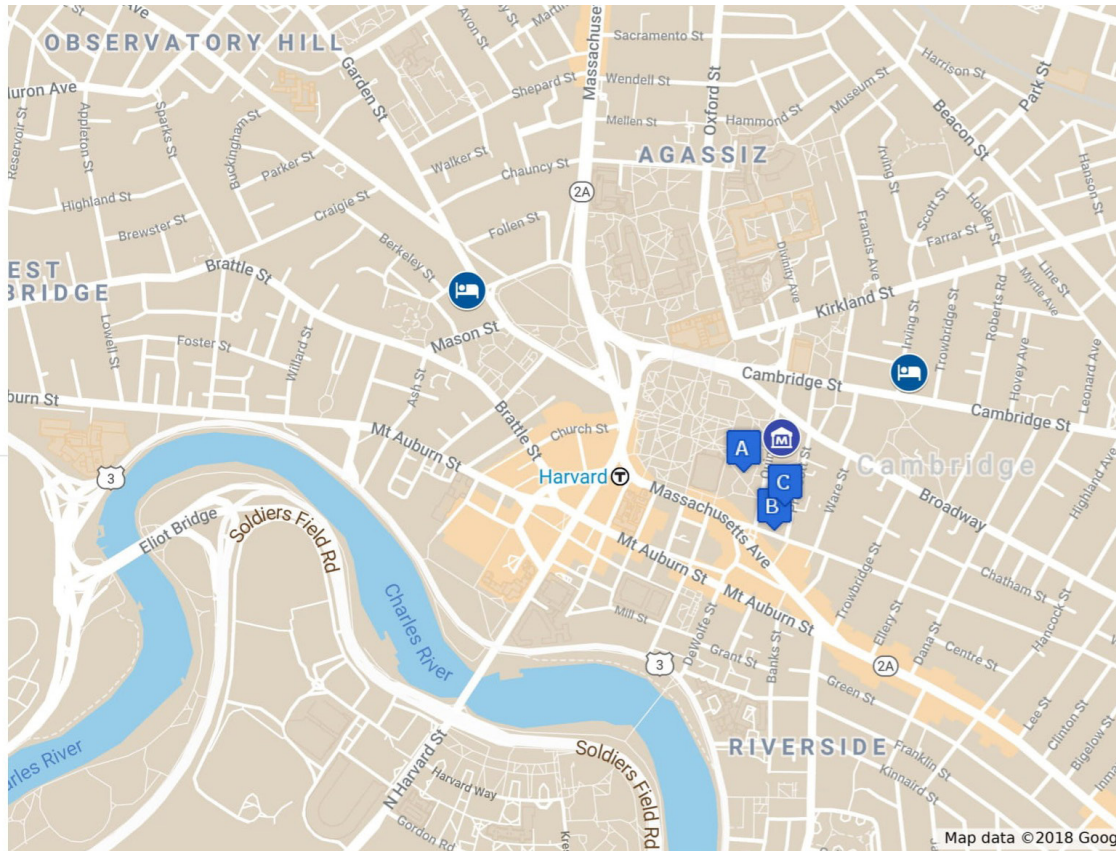
Click on "I am a guest"

Click on "Register for Login Credentials" and provide your contact information when requested. This will generate a login profile which grants you 24 hours of access.

Click on "Log in" at the bottom of the receipt webpage.

To log in again during the same 24hr period, go to getonline.harvard.edu and click "Login with Guest Credentials"

LOCATION



Emerson Hall - Keynote
Lecture (Friday)



Barker Center - Symposium
(Saturday)



Harvard Art Museums - Study
Session



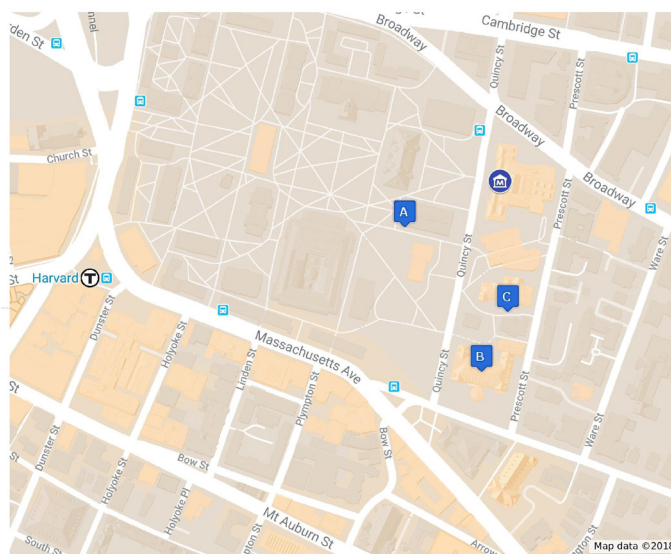
Irving House at Harvard



Sheraton Commander Hotel



Faculty Club



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A sculptor at work, Sahoo stone craft training workshop, Puri, Odisha. Photo(c) JKim 2004