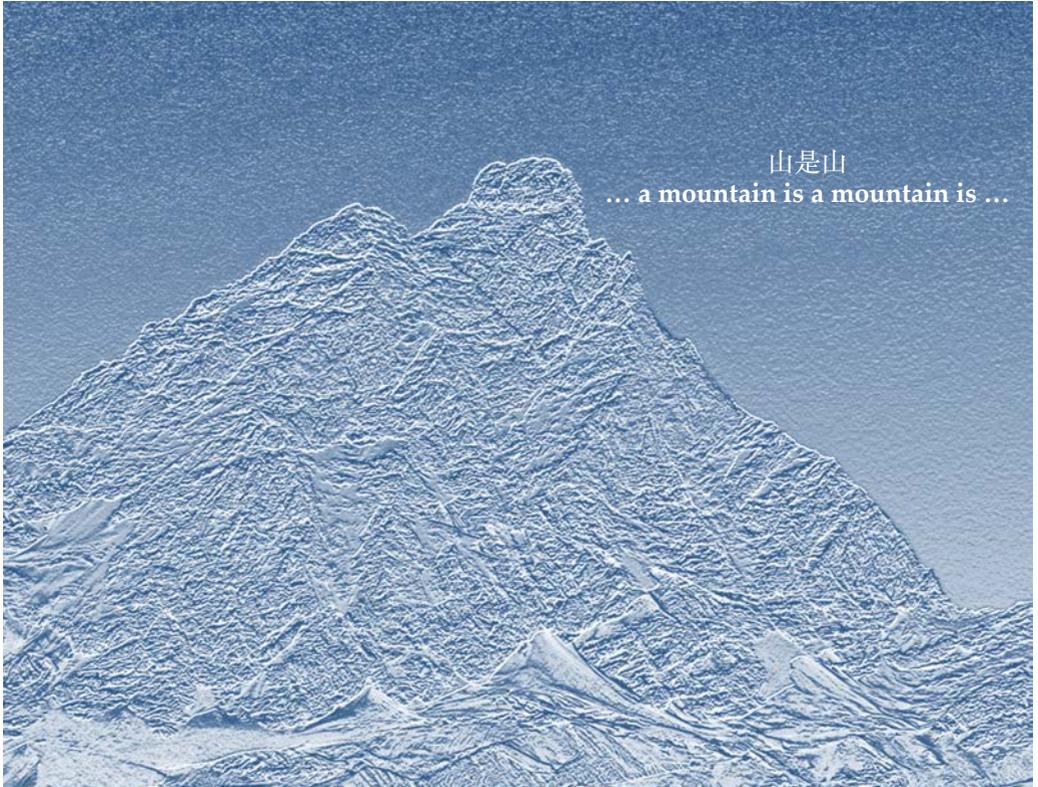




**University of  
Zurich** <sup>UZH</sup>

**Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies  
University Research Priority Program (URPP) Asia and Europe**



山是山

... a mountain is a mountain is ...

# **Vision and Visuality in Buddhism and Beyond**

**Workshop, Zurich, November 24–26, 2016**

# Outline

老僧三十年前。未參禪時。見山是山。見水是水。  
及至後來親見知識。  
有個入處。見山不是山。見水不是水。  
而今得個休歇處。  
依前見山祇是山。見水祇是水。  
——吉州青原惟信禪師，《五燈會元》卷第十七；《指月錄》卷第二十八

*"Before I had studied Zen for thirty years, I saw mountains as mountains, and waters as waters. When I arrived at a more intimate knowledge, I came to the point where I saw that mountains are not mountains, and waters are not waters. But now that I have got its very substance I am at rest. For it's just that I see mountains once again as mountains, and waters once again as waters".*

Saying of Chan-master Qingyuan Weixin of Jizhou recorded in  
*Wudeng huiyuan*, j. 17 and *Zhi yue lu*, j. 28;  
Transl. by Alan Watts, in *The Way of Zen*, 1971 [1957], p.146.

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Buddhist terminology abounds in visual metaphors. The extensive use of visual imagery, besides its efficacy for transmitting the Buddhist doctrine (*dharma*), attests to the primacy of vision in Buddhist theories of perception and cognition. The Sanskrit term for 'perception' itself, *pratyakṣa*, literally means 'in front of one's eyes'. Knowledge attained through perception, especially visual perception, is recognized as an essential component in the process of cognition in Buddhist epistemology.

Vision and visuality were thus often taken as paradigmatic examples in numerous analyses of sensual experience found in Buddhist teachings. It is evident from these analyses that visuality is essential in both its function of constituting the conventional world of experience (Skt. *rūpadhātu*, Chinese/Japanese 色界), and in attaining a clear vision into the truth of the world as such (Skt. *dharmadhātu*, Chin./Jpn. 法界). It therefore seems that an inquiry into this twofold function of visuality in Buddhist texts may further our understanding of Buddhist conceptualizations about the nature of the world.

References to Buddhist theories of perception and visuality, their specific terminologies and metaphorical vocabulary, are recurrent throughout epistemological and aesthetic reflections in East Asia. This is true even for texts that do not explicitly relate to a Buddhist context. Important theoretical inspirations include the 'mind-

only theory' (*yogācāra*, 唯識), the 'theory of perception' (*pratyakṣa pramāna*, 現量), and influences from other Buddhist schools. The use of particular terms such as 觀 ('inspection/observation', Skt. *vipaśyanā*, *vidarśanā*) indicates a conscious reference to Buddhist contemplative practices and methods for attaining a kind of knowledge that transcends the senses.

East Asian authors, reflecting on the relationship of cognition and perception, of genuineness and illusion, of emptiness and appearance, seem to have expanded the creative potential entailed by Buddhist views on visuality. For instance, the Chinese literatus and lay Buddhist Li Rihua 李日華 (1565–1635) elaborated a theory of pictorial order as a visualization of different levels of consciousness, which he explicitly interpreted in terms of 'mind-only theory' (Li 2010: 287, Lukicheva 2016). Examples such as this illustrate how the visual in its role of mediating between different levels of consciousness emerges as an important topic in aesthetic reasoning.

It is probably due to the emphasis on language, concepts and the discursive analysis of the doctrine in Buddhist studies that less attention has been paid to the use and specific significance of visuality (but see, e.g., Wayman 1984, Eckel 1992, Kinard 1997, McMahan 2002, Kapstein 2004, Yamabe 2005 and Rotman 2008). This may be one of the reasons why a more thoroughgoing assessment on its implications for East Asian theories of cognition and aesthetics is still by and large lacking, and it is true in spite of both a well-established tradition of Buddhist art history and recurrent, yet typically rather loose allusions to "Zen Buddhism" topoi in East Asian art and art history.

The proposed workshop intends to focus on such aspects of Buddhist theory and practice where visual perception and visuality play a central role, including both the metaphorical functioning of visual imagery as well as cases, where actual visionary experiences are discussed or evoked. Consideration of both the Buddhist conceptions in their original discursive contexts and their adaptation and transformations within the broader fields of epistemology and aesthetics in East Asia are bound to reveal new insights into the nature of visuality and its creative potentials. It is our hope that these findings may provide innovative perspectives, prone to complement the common emphasis on linguistic-categorical aspects in Buddhological scholarship. At the same time, we endeavour to take a first step towards establishing a philologically grounded and philosophically argued foundation for a critical discussion of the uses of the Buddhist conceptions of vision and visuality in their wider epistemological and aesthetic contexts.

The following questions illustrate the range of workshop contributions and discussions:

- What is the role of the visual, its modes and mechanisms, in analyses of perception in Buddhist and Buddhist-influenced traditions?
- What role do visual metaphors play terminologically, especially in the domains of perception and cognition?
- How is the relationship of vision and knowledge conceived?
- What is the place of perception vis-à-vis the discursive and conceptual? How does it relate to the much-debated contrast of “appearance” vs. “reality”?
- What is the connection between theoretical analyses of vision and perception to artistic practices?
- How are Buddhist views on the relevant topics adapted to non-Buddhist contexts?
- How do Buddhist or Buddhist-influenced reflections on visuality relate to other theories of vision (e.g. those of the Mediterranean antiquity and the medieval Europe; of phenomenology and cognitive sciences)?

Our workshop brings together specialists engaged in studies of Buddhist theories of knowledge and contemplative practices in India and East Asia with specialists working on the reception and manifold adaptations of such theories beyond the immediate Buddhist contexts. As discussants we have invited experts in linguistics and visual theory, as well as psychology and philosophy from the University of Zurich and other Swiss institutions.

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The organizers hope that a detailed investigation of the functions of visuality from the perspectives mentioned above will not only lead to a better understanding of its role in Buddhism and related theories of cognition and aesthetics, but that it will also provide a basis for discussions of visuality as a cultural phenomenon in a wider framework. This pertains to fundamental aspects of the construction of reality, to the function of visuality in attempts to transcend the sensual in order to attain a “vision” of the absolute, and, eventually, the creative potential of the contrast between “genuine” and “illusionary” in visual arts.

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# Program

## Day 1 Thursday, November 24, 2016

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**Location** University of Zurich, Room RAA G-01, Rämistrasse 59, 8001 Zurich

**16:30–16:45** Registration

**16:45–17:00** Wolfgang Behr (University of Zurich)

Welcome and Introduction

**17:00–18:00** Introductory Notes on the Workshop Theme

The Vocabulary of Perception in Pre-Buddhist and Early Buddhist Texts in Medieval China (Rafael Suter)

The Adaptation of Buddhist Concepts of Visuality in Aesthetic Theories (Polina Lukicheva)

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**18:15–20:00** Apéro (Lichthof)

## Day 2 Friday, November 25, 2016

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**Location** University of Zurich, Room KOL G-217, Rämistrasse 71, 8006 Zurich

**9:00–9:50** Jens Schlieter (University of Bern)

Transgressing the Boundary of Vision: The Horizon of Vision and Vision in the “Beyond”

**9:50–10:40** Philipp A. Maas (University of Vienna)

On the Meaning of Dhyāna Meditation in Classical Yoga

**10:40–10:55** Coffee break

**10:55–11:45** Cristina Pecchia (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna)

Seeing and Visualizing from the Point of View of the Indian Epistemological Tradition

- 11:45–12:35 Steffen Döll (University of Hamburg)**  
How Is This Not the Realm of Universal Salvation?  
Utopia, Architecture, and Vision in Medieval Japanese Buddhism
- 12:35–13:25 Paulus Kaufmann (LMU Munich)**  
True Images? – Visuality in Esoteric Buddhism
- 13:25–15:00 Lunch (by invitation)**
- 15:00–15:50 Pamela D. Winfield (Elon University)**  
Material Theory, Visual Culture, and Dōgen’s Vision for a New Zen  
Monastery in Japan
- 15:50–16:40 Hans-Rudolf Kantor (Huafan University, Taiwan)**  
Non-duality of the Visible and Invisible – Ambiguities and  
Paradoxes of “Observation” in Chinese Mahāyāna
- 16:40–16:55 Coffee break (Lichthof)**
- 16:55–17:45 Dan Lusthaus (Harvard University)**  
Shining a Light on Reflection: One Buddhist Answer to the “Hard  
Problem”
- 17:45–19:00 Remarks by Raji C. Steineck (University of Zurich) and Discussion**
- 19:30 Dinner (by invitation)**

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## Day 3 Saturday, November 26, 2016

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- Location University of Zurich, Room RAA G-01, Rämistrasse 59, 8001 Zurich**
- 9:00–9:50 Jane Geaney (University of Richmond)**  
Vision (and Buddhism?) in the Development of an Early Chinese  
Metalinguistic Term
- 9:50–10:40 Christoph Anderl (Ghent University)**  
The Terminology of External and Internal Visual Processes in Early  
Chan Buddhism
- 10:40–10:55 Coffee break (Lichthof)**

- 10:55–11:45**    **Stephan Peter Bumbacher (University of Basel)**  
Visualization — A Peculiar Form of Communication in Buddhism and Daoism
- 11:45–12:35**    **Paula Varsano (University of California, Berkeley)**  
Seeing Things: Visuality and Empathy in the “Yongwu” (Singing about Objects) Tradition in Classical Chinese Poetry
- 12:35–13:25**    **Mark Nürnberger (LMU Munich)**  
Emergence as Endeavor within the Structure of the Lotus Sūtra
- 13:25–15:00**    **Lunch (by invitation)**
- 15:00–15:50**    **Barbara Lund (LMU Munich)**  
Visual Skillful Means – Described in Terms of Image Studies
- 15:50–16:40**    **Xiao Yang (Heidelberg University)**  
Between Icons and Mandalas: The Image of Mahāmāyūrī in Sichuan during the 9<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> Centuries
- 16:40–16:55**    **Coffee break (Lichthof)**
- 16:55–17:45**    **Nicholas Newton (University of Edinburgh)**  
The Uses of Light: Visuality, Metaphor and Rhetorical Strategy in the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*
- 17:45–18:15**    **Concluding Discussion**

### Organizers

Polina Lukicheva, Rafael Suter, and Wolfgang Behr

### Locations

- Room RAA G-01, Rämistrasse 59, 8001 Zurich (November 24 and 26, 2016)
- Room KOL G-217, Rämistrasse 71, 8006 Zurich (November 25, 2016)

### Registration and Contact

Please register by November 17, 2016: [polina.lukicheva@uzh.ch](mailto:polina.lukicheva@uzh.ch)

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