

The Silk Road: Art and Design from Silk to Books



Buddha, 2nd c., National Museum New Delhi 68.187.
Photographer Daniel Waugh

A Royal Asiatic Society Summer School Monday Sept. 6th – Thursday Sept. 9th, 2021

The influence of the interactions enabled by the Afro-Eurasian trade routes known as the Silk Roads are much in discussion today, especially with China's Belt Road Initiative. But what is the story of the Silk Road? Does such a concept make sense? What does it mean in terms of the history and art of pre-modern Afro-Eurasia?

In this 4-day course, leading scholars on the historical Silk Road will introduce the term, its history and the 20th century explorations which brought the role of central Asia to the fore. The course will then look in some detail at aspects of Silk Road art and technologies, concentrating throughout on the designs and motifs that travelled the Silk Roads, moving across media and taking on local forms: from dragons to hares, pearl roundel to swastikas; and the vine to the pomegranate. Silk production and fashion, books and printing, glass, ceramics, metalware, and architecture will all be covered. The participants will also have the chance to see original manuscripts and books at the British Library (TBC) and the Royal Asiatic Society, introduced by their curators.

This is a course intended for a general audience. No prior knowledge is required, although a short bibliography will be supplied for those wishing to do some reading in advance. There will be ample opportunity for questions and group discussion.

COVID note: The group will be limited to 8 people and the course will be held in the lecture theatre providing ample room for social distancing. The lecturers have all received full vaccination. We will request that everyone carries out a self-test on the evening before the course and does not attend if this proves positive (a place will be kept for them on a future course).

The Silk Road: Art and Design from Silk to Books

DETAILS

Venue: The Royal Asiatic Society, 14 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HD
Duration: 4 days Monday-Thursday non-residential (and socially distanced)
Cost: £600 Non-residential including 4 lunches and tea and coffee (Fellows receive a 10% discount). **NB please let us know of any dietary requirements.**

COURSE ORGANISERS AND LEAD TUTORS

Prof. Susan Whitfield	Professor in Silk Road Studies, University of East Anglia
Dr. Alison Ohta	Director, Royal Asiatic Society
Dr. Peter Coles	Morus Londinium and Goldsmiths' College London
Mélodie Doumy	IDP, The British Library (TBC)

For further information: ao@royalasiaticsociety.org;



Photographer: John Falconer

PROGRAMME

All lectures will be given by Professor Whitfield unless otherwise indicated

Monday

- 10.00-10.30: Welcome, introductions and practical matters over coffee
- 10.30-12.45: The Silk Road: Geography, History and Cultures
- 12.45-13.45: Lunch
- 13.45-15.45: Silk on the Silk Road: Technology, Fashion and Design

Tuesday

- 10.00-12.30: Religions of the Silk Road: Art, Architecture and Design
- 12.30-13.30: Lunch
- 13.30-15.30: Technology, Materials and Ornament: metalware, glass, ceramics, and more
- 16.00-18.00: England's Early Silk Industry: Walk and lecture led by Dr Peter Coles
Followed by early evening drinks outside, weather permitting

Wednesday

- 10.00-11.30: From Paper to Print: Pre-Islamic book culture and the start of printing
- 11.45-13.00: The Book in the Islamic World and Its Influences (AO)
- 13.00-13.45: Lunch
- 14.45-15.00: The Book in the Islamic World and Its Influences (continued) (AO)
[A visit to the British Library for a curator led show and tell of Silk Road manuscripts is scheduled but, if not possible, will be arranged for the group at a later date].

Thursday

- 10.00-11.00: Ornament of the book and beyond (AO)
- 11.30-12.30: View of material in RAS Library
- 12.30-13.30: Lunch
- 13.30-15.00: Silk Roads Material, Ornament and Aesthetics — the Influence in Europe
Closing Discussion