THE ART OF ENLIGHTENMENT
SPRING 2017

HIAA 22, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 10–11, List 110
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course surveys the history of Buddhist art-making and visualization practices from the earliest representations of the Buddha to the curatorial practices of modern museums. Ranging from the great mandala of Borobudur in Java to the Zen monasteries of Japan, we will examine the complex ways in which Buddhist theology and scripture interacted with the particularities of time and place to generate the extraordinary diversity of Buddhist art. The role of patronage, pilgrimage, and persecution will all be considered in depth. We will also look closely at lineage-building practices, both within communities of Buddhist faith and in the modern conceptualization of Buddhist art itself. Throughout these inquiries, the sensorial qualities of the art, and their relationship to medium, technics, and the conventions of workshop practice, will remain at the forefront of our analysis. Together, we will explore the ways in which artists transformed lumber, metal, and stone into some of the most powerful and sublime monuments of world art.