

# UTILIZING VISUAL MATERIALS: THE IMPORTANCE OF CLOSE LOOKING

**THE** PROJECT  
**RUBIN** HIMALAYAN ART

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## UTILIZING VISUAL MATERIALS

- I. Centers the visual material as a primary source for student research and engagement
- II. Structured looking activities
- III. Using the digital platform to establish multiple modes of engagement
- IV. Opportunities for universal design, experiential learning, and engaging all types of learning abilities



# CLOSE LOOKING EXERCISES



These exercises are opportunities to learn **HOW** to look and encourages students to ask questions.

1. Identifying formal visual features
2. Identifying visual evidence of possible symbols or narrative content that may communicate meaning
3. Writing simple questions that arise while looking

## BENEFITS:

- At its most basic level this is simply looking, describing, and asking questions.
- Removes the need for any background information.
- Provides a starting point for research and analysis.

## OBJECT No. 85:

**Plaque Commemorating the Bhimaratha Old Age Ritual**, Nepal.  
Copper (repoussé); Rubin Museum of Art; Gift of Shelley and Donald Rubin; C2006.66.63 (HAR 700095)

# CLOSE LOOKING EXERCISES



## TWO PRIMARY CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

1. IMAGE MAPPING
2. DIRECTED OBSERVATION

EASILY ADAPTED TO LARGE LECTURE HALLS, SMALL SEMINARS,  
OR ONLINE COURSES

### **OBJECT No. 85:**

**Plaque Commemorating the Bhimaratha Old Age Ritual, Nepal.**  
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# IMAGE MAPPING

1. Start with asking students to sketch an unknown and unidentified object.
2. As they work, have them identify the visual features they can recognize (drawing lines and writing names of features).
3. Add question marks if they aren't sure about elements, or circle components they have questions about.
4. When time is over, students share features they have identified with the class or in groups.

## BENEFITS:

- Does not require any background knowledge.
- Gives students permission to be curious.
- Gives the instructor permission to NOT be the expert in the room.
- Demonstrates different ways of "SEEING".

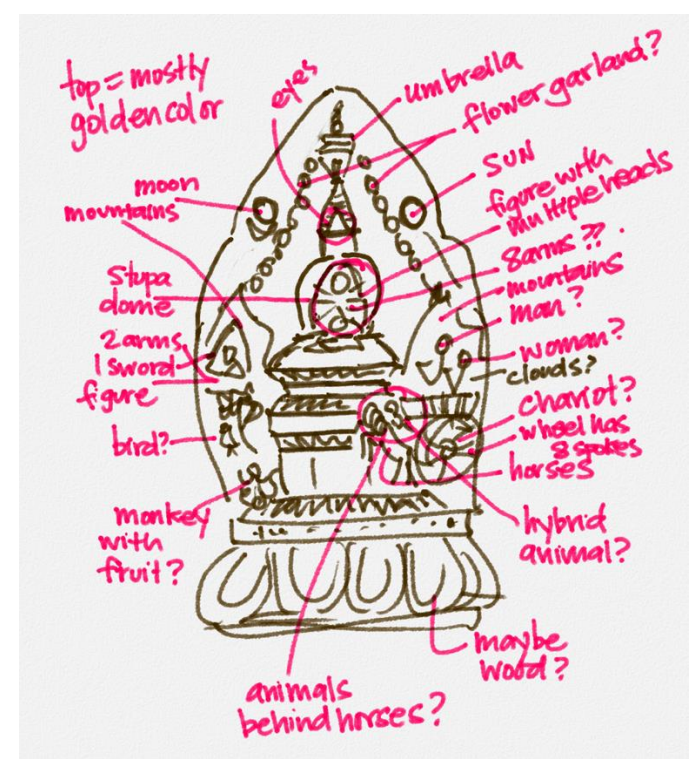




DETAILED SKETCH WITH NOTATIONS  
AND QUESTIONS MARKS







## DISCUSSION INSTRUCTIONS:

Share your sketches with your peers and compare the features identified. Using your observations as evidence, what are some of the stories the work might be telling?

It's okay to be unsure about the meaning!

This is about interpreting using the observations you made.



# DIRECTED OBSERVATION



CLOSE LOOKING PRACTICE

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**INITIAL OBSERVATIONS.** Use descriptive language to communicate your observations. Do not interpret, only describe the formal elements you can see.  
SCALE • SPACE • FORM/SHAPE • LINE • COLOR • LIGHT • TONE • TEXTURE • PATTERN

**SAMPLE CLASS HANDOUT**

<b>DETAIL #1:</b> New observations & descriptions	<b>DETAIL #2:</b> New observations & descriptions
<b>DETAIL #3:</b> New observations & descriptions	<b>DETAIL #4:</b> New observations & descriptions

**REFLECT.** Following the instructor's prompt, add your ideas below.



**1ST SLIDE:**

**Provides an overview of the image without any identifying information**

**INITIAL OBSERVATIONS:**

For 3 minutes, write down your observations about this work of art. Find descriptive language to communicate your observations.

**Describe, but do not analyze.**



**2ND SLIDE:**  
**Provides a closer detail**



Detail #1.  
For the next 30 seconds, focus on some details of the work. See if you can observe any new information. **Describe, but do not analyze.**





**3RD SLIDE:**  
**Provides a closer detail**

Detail #2.  
For the next 30 seconds, focus on some details of the work. See if you can observe any new information. **Describe, but do not analyze.**



**4TH SLIDE:**  
**Provides an even tighter detail**

Detail #3.  
For the next 30 seconds, focus on some details of the work. See if you can observe any new information. **Describe, but do not analyze.**





**5TH SLIDE:**  
**Provides an even tighter detail**

Detail #4.  
For the next 30 seconds, focus on some details of the work. See if you can observe any new information. **Describe, but do not analyze.**



## 6TH SLIDE:

Returns to the overview and asks students to interpret the work in some way

### DISCUSSION INSTRUCTIONS:

Using your observations as evidence to support your claims, what are some of the stories the artwork might be telling? What theme(s) might the artist be exploring?

It's okay to be unsure about the meaning!

This is about interpreting using the observations you can see.





**7TH SLIDE:**

**Introduce the work AFTER students have compiled their viewing notes**



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**8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> SLIDES:**  
**Provides visual context(s) for students**



Newar Janku Celebrations (Bhimaratha Ritual)



# THE RUBIN USING DIGITAL RESOURCES TO PROVIDE CONTEXT



**Key figural forms**, such as buddhas, bodhisattvas, female deities, wrathful deities, and humans are represented in paintings, sculptures, and graphic panels

An **audio guide** for each type

Examples on the digital resources platform: **essays** from the publication (QR code)

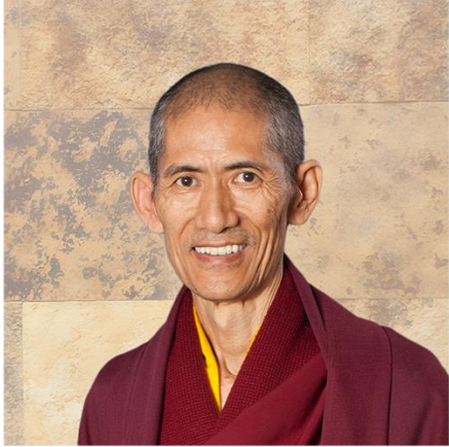
**Connections** to contemplative practices, mindfulness, Buddhism, and philosophy

**First-person story** from a Buddhist practitioner of taking bodhisattva vows (QR code)

# THE RUBIN FINDING CONNECTIONS ACROSS DISCIPLINES WITH VISUAL MATERIAL

## HIMALAYAN VOICES: A practitioner talking about three deities of longevity

Speaker:  
Khenpo Pema Wagndak

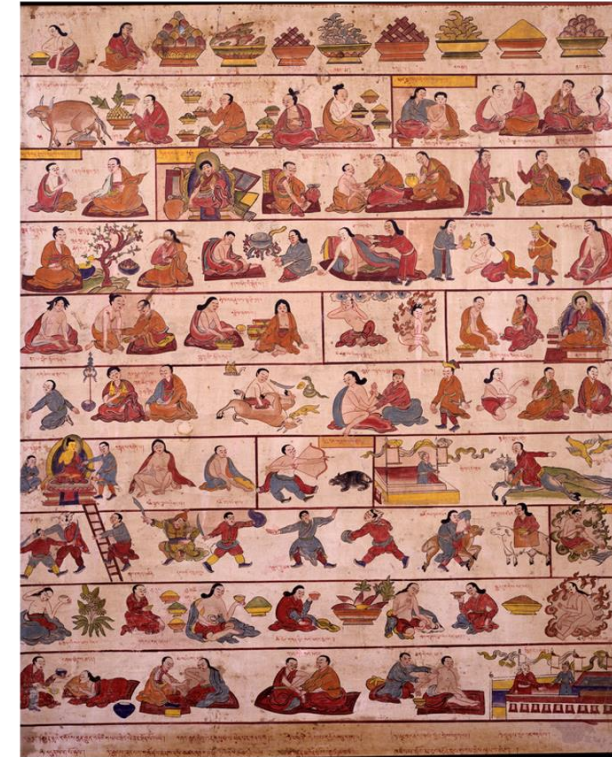


White Tara; Rubin Museum of Art; C2006.66.285 (HAR 658)



## HIMALAYAN VOICES: A Tibetan doctor talking about diet illustrated in medical painting

Speaker:  
Dr. Kunga Wangdue



Medical painting on Prophylactics, Diagnosis, and Therapeutic Principles (Blue Beryl chapters 23 - 28) Rubin Museum of Art C2006.66.514 (HAR 983)









Interactive maps, clean layouts, and curated selection of related media/articles reduce distractions, allowing students to stay focused.



some guidance in the absence of inscriptive or textual documentation. The rendering of the slender and elongated limbs without sacrificing the articulation of a nuanced body structure suggests a working date of the late tenth or early eleventh century.

Notes

1. See Linrothe, Rein, and Luzzatto 2018. --
2. These include Druk, Karla, and Achi on the border areas and a few sculptures in Left and Shey, all sites in greater Ladakh. See Linrothe 2018, Alexander and van Schaik 2011, Demerod 2007. --
3. See Luzzatto 2008, 245, fig. 4, and 250, fig. 1; also Linrothe 2016, 179. --
4. Suvmar 2019. --
5. Linrothe 2016, 179-80. --
6. Bevinger et al. 2016, 305. Arisa Miyajima, who gives the height of the Maitreya at Mulbekh as nine meters, connects the "youth of Maitreya" to "the divinity of the Calavastri" and "abandon for emperors related to the enormous Buddha." Miyajima 2004, 91, 98. Julia Shaw also points to "the Dharma being easily appropriated by kings who sought to draw on analogies between themselves and the Buddha as Dharmapala and Calavastri." Shaw 1986, 16. --
7. Wood 2018, 22. --
8. Luzzatto 2008, 250-51. --
9. Alexander and van Schaik 2011, 438. --
10. Demerod 2008, 9. --
11. "The inscription is perfectly well a formal record of the tradition and dedication of the image, but a later graffiti," Alexander and van Schaik 2011, 428. Inscriptions recorded by A. H. Francke at Mulbekh are all thirteenth century or later; see Francke 1906. --
12. Dier 1866, 180. --
13. Waddell 1841, 1343. --
14. Luzzatto 2008, 81, 86. --

Further Reading

Essay Citation

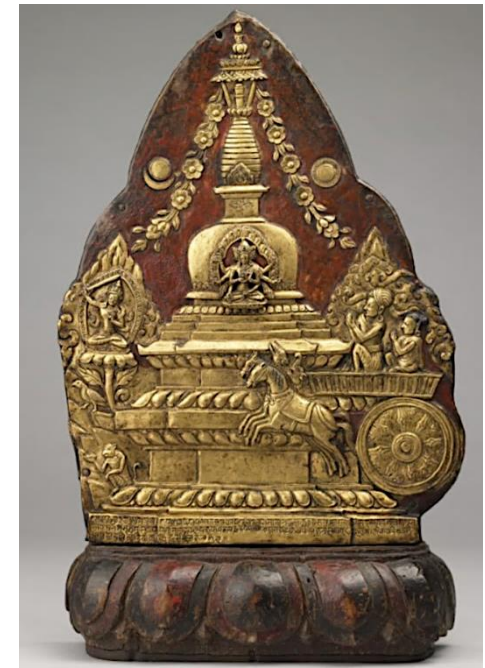
INTERACTIVE DIGITAL PLATFORM

ENGAGES STUDENTS WITH A VARIETY OF LEARNING STYLES AND NEEDS

RELATED OBJECTS







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