

- MEDIA ONLY:** Allison Peck, 202.633.0447
Ellie Reynolds, 202.633.0521
PressAsia@si.edu Updated Dec. 8, 2013
- MEDIA PREVIEW:** Tuesday, Oct. 22, 9:30 a.m.; RSVP to PressAsia@si.edu
- ONLINE:** asia.si.edu/press
asia.si.edu/yoga
[@FreerSackler](https://twitter.com/FreerSackler), [#artofyoga](https://twitter.com/artofyoga)
- What:** “Yoga: The Art of Transformation”
- Where:** Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
- When:** Oct. 19, 2013–Jan. 26, 2014
- Description:** All over the world, millions of people practice yoga to find spiritual insight or better health. Practitioners and non-practitioners alike are aware of yoga's origins in India. But very few know of yoga's goals and means of transforming body and consciousness, its profound philosophical underpinnings, its presence within Jain, Buddhist, and Sufi as well as Hindu traditions, or the surprisingly diverse social roles played by male and female yogic practitioners over centuries.
- “The Art of Transformation,” the world's first exhibition about yoga's visual history, will explore its diverse meanings from its early roots to its emergence on the global stage. 90 masterpieces of sculpture and painting, dating from the second to the 18th century, will illuminate yoga's central tenets as well as its obscured histories. Some 40 colonial and early modern photographs, books, and films will reveal how yogis became despised during the 19th century and how yoga was transformed in early 20th-century India as a democratic practice open to all.
- Objects:** *Yoga: The Art of Transformation* includes objects from 25 museums and private collections in India, Europe and the United States, amassing one of the most remarkable surveys of Indian art.
- Date range:** 2nd century CE–1940, with a majority from the 8th–18th century CE
- Object count:** 133 objects
- Media and format (select list):** Stone, bronze and marble sculptures, paintings, illustrated manuscripts, a scroll, photographs, films, books and printed materials, posters and postcards
- Curator:** Debra Diamond, *Associate Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery*

- Tour:** The Arthur M. Sackler Gallery will be the first venue for *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*. Additional tour locations include:
- San Francisco Asian Art Museum, San Francisco: Feb. 21–May 25, 2014
 - Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland: June 22–Sep. 7, 2014

Exhibition Introduction

Overview: Sculptures and paintings of human and divine teachers of yoga introduce the exhibition and show yoga transcending boundaries of gender and religion. Highlights include a luminous marble sculpture of a meditating Jina and a shimmering Jodhpur painting of *Siddhas* (associated with hatha yoga) creating the cosmos. Three early sculptures illuminate the origins of yoga, while later temple sculptures express the power of tantra and its incorporation into yogic traditions. Highlights include a voluptuous flying yogini from north India, a trio of life-size yogini goddesses from a south Indian temple, and two extraordinary sculptures of the skull-bearing deity Bhairava.

The Path of Yoga

Two galleries explore the means and practices of achieving yogic transformation in pre-modern India. Highlights include a powerful Chola dynasty bronze of the Hindu deity Narasimha meditating with a *yogapatta* (strap), ten folios from the first illustrated treatise of yoga postures (1600–1604), mesmerizing court paintings of masters of yoga embodying the cosmos and monumental images of the subtle (yogic) body.

Yoga in the Indian Imagination 1570–1830

Exquisite paintings and manuscripts created in Hindu and Islamic courts reveal how yogis became deeply and diversely embedded in Indian culture. Many draw upon social perceptions of yogis that were pervasive for centuries. Highlights include an exquisite bifolio from the Gulshan Album of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, the spellbinding *Yogini with Mynah* from Bijapur, and superb paintings of yogis as battling ascetics, romantic heroes, or as the serene embodiments of ragas (classical music compositions).

Yoga in the Transnational Imagination 1850–1940

This gallery explores the exoticized “yogis” that dominated public discourse and popular representations between 1850 and 1940. Highlights include an albumen print of “yogis” staged and photographed by Collin Murray (for Bourne and Shepherd) and Thomas Edison’s *Hindoo Fakir*, the first movie made of an Indian subject.

Modern Transformations

The exhibition concludes with the yoga renaissance of the late 19th and early 20th century when the rudiments of modern yoga—as non-sectarian, as a health practice and as posture sequences — developed in India. Highlights include two of Thomas Harrison’s photographs of Swami Vivekananda, who brought an ecumenical and philosophically focused yoga to America in 1893, and what may be the earliest film of Krishnamacharya and his student B.K.S. Iyengar demonstrating posture sequences.

Events:

Title: Some Enlightened Evening and Transcendence Soiree

Type: Gala and After Party

Date: Thursday, Oct. 17, 6:30 p.m.

Location: Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium, 1301 Constitution Ave NW, Washington, D.C.

Description: This year's benefit Gala celebrates the opening of *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*. On Thursday evening, October 17, the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery is the exciting site for those who love art, fine cuisine, and award-winning Indian music! Patrons can sponsor tables for \$50,000, \$25,000, and \$10,000 with tantalizing benefits. Tickets are also available at \$2,500 and \$1,000 levels. The evening concludes with "Transcendence," a soiree hosted by the Silk Road Society, the museum's young professionals group. More information: [website](#)

Title: World Premiere of Smithsonian Channel's "Mystic Journey: Kumbh Mela"

Type: Film

Date: Friday, Oct. 18, 4:30 p.m.

Location: Studio 1, NPR Headquarters, 1111 N. Capital St. NE, Washington, D.C.

Description: With special guest, Sir James Mallinson, PhD. In 2013, actor Dominic West (star of HBO's hit series "The Wire") and Sanskrit scholar Sir Jim Mallinson traveled to India for the *Maha Kumbh Mela*, a mass Hindu pilgrimage of faith considered to be the largest peaceful gathering in the world. There, Dominic's old friend James becomes the first westerner in his sect of master yogis to be ordained as a *Mahant*, or commander. This special sneak peek is courtesy Smithsonian Channel; free advance tickets are required. More information: [event listing](#)

Title: Chandrika Krishnamurthy Tandon, vocals

Type: Performance

Date: Saturday, Oct. 19, 7:30 p.m.

Location: Studio 1, NPR Headquarters, 1111 N. Capital St. NE, Washington, D.C.

Description: This Grammy-nominated singer's soaring voice and innovative fusion of Sanskrit chant with world music are accompanied by an instrumental and vocal ensemble and images from *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*. Free advance tickets are required. More information: [event listing](#)

Title: ImaginAsia: Yoga

Type: Family Programming

Dates: Saturdays, Oct. 19, Nov. 16, Nov. 23, Dec. 7, and Jan. 25; 2 p.m.

Sundays, Oct. 20, Nov. 17, Nov. 24, Dec. 8, and Jan. 26; 2 p.m.

Location: Sublevel 2, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Description: In *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, learn how a person became a yogi, what was gained and lost in the process, and yogis' influence on Indian rulers and villagers. Then return to the ImaginAsia classroom to paint yantras used to focus the mind. For kids ages 8–14 and their adult companions. More information: [event listing](#)

Title: Diwali: India's Festival of Lights, Celebrating the Art of Yoga

Type: Opening Celebration

Date: Saturday, Oct. 26, 12–7:30 p.m.

Location: Freer and Sackler Galleries

Description: Mark the opening of *Yoga: The Art of Transformation* and Diwali, the Indian festival of lights, with a full day of public activities. Experience the world's first exhibition of yogic art, hear classical Indian music, participate in a traditional lamp-lighting ceremony, take yoga classes, and create art through hands-on workshops. Free, with food available for purchase. More information: [event listing](#)

Title: Indian Classical Music and the Yoga of Sound

Type: Performance

Date: Saturday, Oct. 26, 7:30 p.m.

Location: Meyer Auditorium, Freer Gallery of Art

Description: K. Sridhar performs classical ragas and then discusses the history and practice of nada yoga (yoga of sound). He is joined by Krishna Ramdas on the tabla. Join us for a pre-concert tour in the Arts of the Indian Subcontinent and Himalayas galleries, 6:45 p.m. More information: [event listing](#)

Title: Art in Context: Yoga in the Galleries

Type: Workshop

Date: Wednesdays, Nov. 6, 2013–Jan. 22, 2014, 12:30–2 p.m.; Sundays, Nov. 10, 2013–Jan. 22, 2014, 10:30 a.m.–noon and 3:30–5 p.m.

Location: Sublevel 1, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Description: Take a break to open your mind and energize your spirit. Look at art and practice yoga in conjunction with the exhibitions *Yoga: The Art of Transformation* and *Strange and Wondrous: Prints of India from the Robert J. Del Bontà Collection*. Join a teaching team of museum docents and guest yoga teachers for a 90-minute workshop. This workshop is designed for adults, with special sessions for ages 50-plus, teens and children; no experience necessary. Advance registration and a \$15 non-refundable materials fee is required. More information: [event listing](#)

Title: Yogis at the Imperial Mughal Court

Type: Gallery talk

Date: Tuesday, Nov. 19, 12:15 pm

Location: Sublevel 1, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Description: Take a journey through Mughal-era India. Join curatorial research intern Najiba Choudhury to explore how yogis were understood within the Indo-Islamic court and visually represented in philosophical and literary manuscripts. More information: [event listing](#)

Title: Yoga and Visual Culture: An Interdisciplinary Symposium

Type: Symposium

Date: Nov. 21–23, 2013

Location: Meyer Auditorium, Freer Gallery of Art

Description: Explore yoga’s histories, meanings, transformations, and practices through the lens of visual culture at this public symposium. Twenty years ago, yoga was largely understood as a monolithic and unchanging tradition. While today we have a far richer understanding of yoga’s historical transformations and trans-sectarian manifestations, visual culture—ranging from sectarian, court, and popular imagery to architecture and photography—remains its least-explored archival resource.

Fifteen scholars from a range of disciplines will present new research on diverse aspects of yoga’s visual culture. Five symposium sessions are organized around topics such as “Yoga and Place” and “Yoga and Print Culture.” Individual paper presentations will alternate with discussions and time to explore the landmark Sackler exhibition *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*. More information: [website](#)

Title: Sound Yoga

Type: Lecture and Performance

Date: Friday, December 6, 7:30 p.m.

Pre-concert lecture, Hindu Philosophies of Sound, 6 pm

Location: Meyer Auditorium, Freer Gallery of Art

Description: Two virtuoso musicians and scholars of Indian music present an evening devoted to Hindustani music and the ancient Indian philosophies of sound. Guy Beck, a vocalist trained in the Hindustani *khyal* tradition, is a visiting scholar in Hinduism and music at Oxford University and the author of *Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound*. Sitarist Srinivas Reddy, a disciple of Pandit Partha Chatterjee, is an assistant professor of South Asian studies at IIT Gandhinagar, who lectures frequently on classical Indian music and literature.

Title: Imagine This: Manil Suri and Rina Banerjee

Type: Gallery talk and reception

Date: Saturday, December 7, 4–7 pm

Location: Sublevel 1, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Description: Award-winning author Manil Suri discusses his “Trimurti” trilogy, based on the trinity of Hindu gods: Vishnu, Shiva, and Devi. His talk is accompanied by a conversation with curator Carol Huh and artist Rina Banerjee. Cosponsored by the Embassy of India. A reception and book signing follow.

Title: Power, the Spirit, and the Flesh

Type: Film series

Dates: Sunday, Dec. 8, 2 p.m.; Friday, Dec. 13, 7 p.m.; Sunday, Dec. 15, 2 p.m.

Location: Meyer Auditorium, Freer Gallery of Art

Description: Three master filmmakers from three different regions of India explore the collision between of religious convention and the messiness of everyday life in a society poised between tradition and modernity. Films to be shown are: “Devi (a.k.a. The

Goddess),” Sunday, Dec. 8, 2 p.m.; “Shadow Kill,” Friday, Dec. 13, 7 p.m.; and “The Ritual,” Sunday, Dec. 15, 2 p.m.

Title: Medical and Modern Yoga

Type: Symposium

Date: Saturday, January 11

Location: Meyer Auditorium, Freer Gallery of Art

In conjunction with “Yoga: The Art of Transformation,” the Freer and Sackler host a symposium on modern yoga practice, therapy, and research—a groundbreaking collaboration between art museums and the emerging field of integrative medicine. The symposium continues January 12 at George Washington University. This event is organized by Therapeutic Yoga of Greater Washington; cost is \$180/person or \$100/students; advance registration is required.

Title: The Places of Practice: Yoga Before Yoga Studios

Type: Curator-led Tour

Date: Tuesday, Jan. 21, 2014, 12 p.m.

Location: Sublevel 1, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Description: Where did yogis practice before there were yoga studios? Debra Diamond, curator of “Yoga: The Art of Transformation,” presents sculptures and paintings that help answer this question. The works define the importance of sacred landscapes and designated architectural settings for Indian yogic practice from the tenth to the twentieth century.

Title: “Yoga: The Art of Transformation” Closing Weekend Events

Type: Special event

Date: Saturday, Jan. 25 and Sunday, Jan. 26

Location: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Before “Yoga: The Art of Transformation” closes, see the landmark exhibition and participate in yoga-related events. On Saturday, master yogis demonstrate sequences in the galleries (1–3 pm). Curator Debra Diamond offers a focused look at “Asanas in Image and History” (1:30–2:30 pm) and signs copies of the exhibition catalogue (3–4 pm). Tours (12:15–1:15 pm) and ImaginAsia family activities (2–4 pm) are offered both Saturday and Sunday.

Catalogue: “Yoga: The Art of Transformation”, published by the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution (*cloth edition distributed by Smithsonian Books/Random House; available in paperback, \$40, and cloth, \$55; 328 pp.*). Available at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Shop and at www.SmithsonianStore.com.

Description: “Yoga: The Art of Transformation,” the world’s first examination of yoga’s visual history, will explore yoga’s meanings and transformations over time; its goals of spiritual enlightenment, worldly power and health; and the beauty and profundity of Indian art. Unique among scholarly art catalogues, “Yoga” speaks to the global yoga market and is the first art book to provide a visual context for yoga’s origins and developments. In addition to seven major essays, the book includes 250- to 1,500-word catalogue entries describing each artwork or related group of artworks (e.g., folios from a single manuscript or works related to a yogic practice, such as meditation). These



entries illuminate the works' individual qualities by situating them, for the first time, within intersecting historical, artistic, and yogic networks.

Contributors/Authors: Joseph S. Alter, Debra Diamond, Carl W. Ernst, James Mallinson, Sita Reddy, Tamara I. Sears, Mark Singleton, and David Gordon White

Organization: *Yoga: The Art of Transformation* is organized by Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian.

Lenders:

- Catherine Glynn Benkaim and Barbara Timmer, Beverly Hills
- The British Museum, London
- The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin
- The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland
- Robert J. Del Bontà, San Francisco
- Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit
- Willard M. and Gloria Huyck, Jr., Los Angeles
- Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- Mehrangarh Museum Trust, Jodhpur
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis
- Museum Rietberg Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland
- Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
- National Anthropological Archives, Suitland
- National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- National Library of Medicine, Bethesda
- Cynthia Hazen Polsky, New York
- Margot and Thomas J. Pritzker, Chicago
- Drs. Kenneth and Joyce Robbins, Potomac
- San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio
- Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin
- Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin
- Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Berlin
- Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco
- Victoria and Albert Museum, London
- Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia
- The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore
- Wellcome Library, London

Tours: Enjoy an in-depth exploration of *Yoga: The Art of Transformation* with a public docent tour, occurring daily starting Nov. 1 and running through Jan. 26, 2014. Public tours begin at 12:15 p.m. and meet at the Sackler Pavilion information desk. Private docent tours are available from early November through Jan. 26, 2014. Please submit a tour

request at least four weeks in advance using the online form. Tour groups can include up to 15 members. More information: [website](#)

Hours: 10 am–5:30 p.m. daily, except Dec. 25

Admission: Free

###