

# The Alphawood Southeast Asian Arts Academic Programme and Capital Gift

## Annual Report 2014/15

A report prepared for the Alphawood Foundation



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# Introduction

## A message from our Director

It is a pleasure to introduce the second annual report prepared for the Alphawood Foundation following your £20 million donation in support of the establishment of the Southeast Asian Arts Academic Programme (SAAAP), and the SOAS expansion into Senate House North Block (SHNB). I would also like to thank you again for your support of the expansion of SAAAP through the Banteay Chhmar scoping project, and your establishment of the Paul Webley Scholarships this year.

I join SOAS at a pivotal moment in its history as the School approaches its hundredth anniversary. SOAS is a very special place. It is at the centre of thought leadership on the issues affecting the regions in which we specialise; Asia, Africa and the Middle East. It's a place of vibrant debate. SOAS staff and students ask the big questions and challenge conventional orthodoxy. We teach languages no one else teaches and our study of histories and cultures mean we offer valuable perspectives that no one else offers. With the rapid spread of globalisation and interconnectedness of our world, SOAS plays a leading role in the preservation and promotion of potentially endangered cultural heritage and knowledge. With the generous support of the Alphawood Foundation, we have been able to sustain and develop our work with respect to the cultural heritage of Southeast Asia.

Since joining SOAS I have witnessed the remarkable level of commitment of the Alphawood Foundation. Alphawood's founder and President Mr Fred Eychaner is an alumnus of the School and this is a point of particular pride for us all at SOAS, as is the unique vision behind this landmark gift.

The elements of the Alphawood programme are being implemented with the objective of ensuring a lasting and positive impact on the heritage and contemporary cultural output of the Southeast Asia region. These elements include the endowment of academic posts, an outreach programme to promote scholarships and help form networks between key players in the arts around Southeast Asia and scholarships for the outstanding professionals, academics, educators, NGO representatives and government employees in the arts from across the region. In addition, investment in world class facilities in the SHNB campus buildings will ensure that scholars have a rich and rewarding educational experience.

On behalf of everyone at SOAS, my thanks to the Foundation and Mr Eychaner for your continued trust in our institution. I hope that you enjoy reading about the activities and successes of the scholars and academics whose work has been enabled through your generous support. It was a pleasure to meet Mr Eychaner and Mr McDonough earlier this year, and I look forward to continuing our conversation on how best to secure a lasting legacy for the School and the Foundation through the Alphawood donation.

**Baroness Valerie Amos**  
**Director, SOAS University of London**

# The Alphawood Scholarships 2014-15

## Introduction and overview

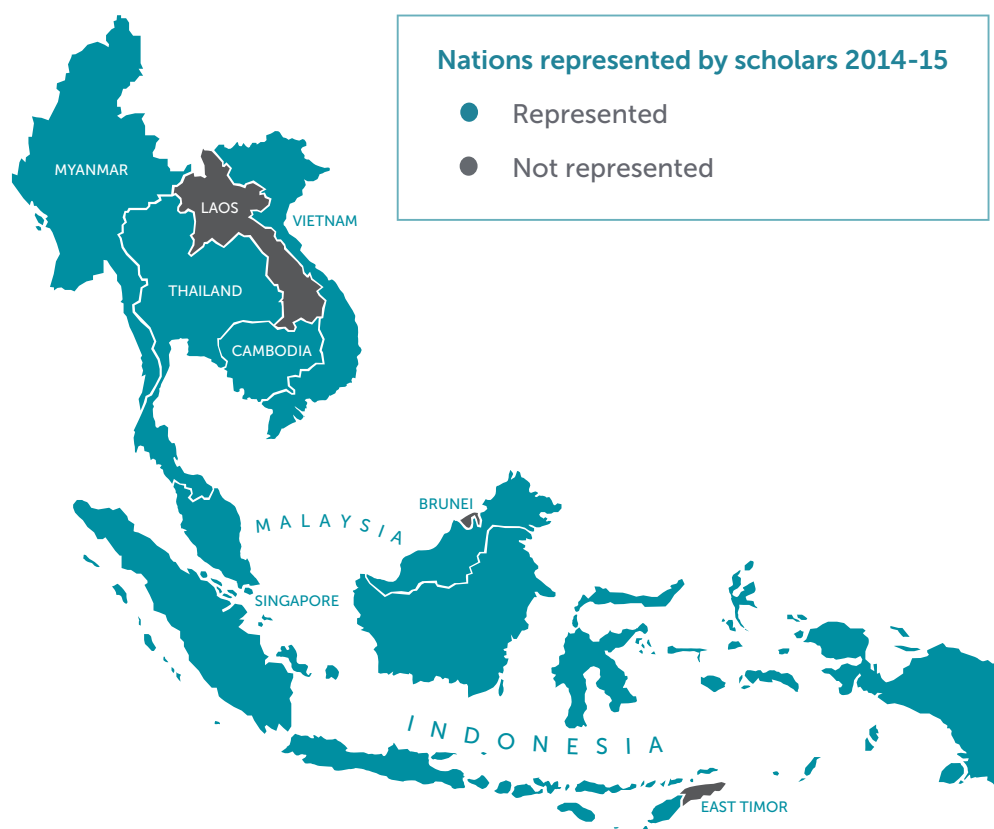
The first cohort of Alphawood scholars for 2014-15 represented seven of the nine nations whose residents are targeted by the programme. They came to us from a wide array of professional and academic backgrounds including museum representatives, NGO organisers, educational institute employees, artists, archaeologists and government employees.

As you will read in their own words throughout this section, all of the scholars demonstrate an innate understanding of the value of the programme beyond their own educational opportunities, and share a commitment to the Alphawood Foundation's vision of an arts network across the region.

We are convinced that they will go on to make an impact for the arts in Southeast Asia, as they have made an impact to the SOAS scholarly community here in London this year.

For this section, we carried out full interviews with those students present at SOAS at the time the report was being prepared. This included the Year 1 scholars, and some of the Year 2 scholars who had arrived for ELAS or pre-session training. Those students not at SOAS at the time, and those who are yet to arrive, are represented by introductory statements.

Overleaf you will find key statistics regarding the intake of Year 2 scholars.



## Alphawood Scholars Year 2

Name	Country of residence	Programme Type	Year	Start date
Heidi Tan	Singapore	Mphil/PhD	Y1-Y5	09/09/2014
Thu Ya Aung	Myanmar	Postgraduate Diploma	Y1-Y2	09/09/2014
Sathal Khun	Cambodia	MA & 6 months ELAS	Y1-Y2	05/01/2015
Su Latt Win	Myanmar	MA & 6 months ELAS	Y1-Y2	05/01/2015
Swe Zin Myint	Myanmar	MA & 6 months ELAS	Y1-Y2	05/01/2015
Samnang Kim	Cambodia	MA & 6 months ELAS	Y1-Y2	05/01/2015
Kelvin Chuah	Malaysia	Postgraduate Diploma	Y1-Y2	20/04/2015
Eko Bastiawan	Indonesia	Postgraduate Diploma	Y1-Y2	20/04/2015
Saw Tun Lin	Myanmar	MA & 12 week Pre-sessional	Y2	29/06/2015
Sokha Seang	Cambodia	MA & 12 week Pre-sessional	Y2	29/06/2015
Udomluck Hoontrakul	Thailand	MA & 12 week Pre-sessional	Y2	29/06/2015
Suon Bin Rith	Cambodia	MA & 12 week Pre-sessional	Y2	29/06/2015
Davin Chhay	Cambodia	Certificate & 10 week summer school	Y2	13/07/2015
Erin Gleeson	Cambodia	MA	Y2	21/09/2015
Grace (Siwan) Lai	Singapore	MA	Y2	21/09/2015
Tuong Linh Do	Vietnam	MA	Y2	21/09/2015
Thao Nguyen	Vietnam	MA	Y2	21/09/2015
Win Myatt Aung	Myanmar	Postgraduate Diploma	Y2	21/09/2015
Thet Mon Htoo	Myanmar	MA & 6 month ELAS	Y2	04/01/2016
Yamin Htay	Myanmar	MA & 6 month ELAS	Y2	04/01/2016
Pipad Krajaejun	Thailand	MA & 6 month ELAS	Y2	04/01/2016
Chhum Menghong	Cambodia	MA & 6 month ELAS	Y2	04/01/2016
Rachna Chhay	Cambodia	MA & 6 month ELAS	Y2	04/01/2016
Pawinna Phetluan	Thailand	MA & 6 month ELAS	Y2	04/01/2016
Kunthea (Sothea) Kou	Cambodia	Postgraduate Diploma & 6 month ELAS	Y2	04/01/2016
Raksmeay Muong	Cambodia	Postgraduate Diploma & 6 month ELAS	Y2	04/01/2016

## Applications by country of residence Year 1-2

Country	Y1 - 2014-15	Y2 - 2015-16
Brunei	0	1
Myanmar	8	8
Cambodia	18	13
China	2	0
Egypt	0	1
India	3	2
Indonesia	16	9
Iran	1	0
Japan	0	1
Laos	3	2
Malaysia	5	3
Pakistan	1	0
The Philippines	2	1
Romania	1	0
Singapore	3	5
Taiwan	0	2
Thailand	7	9
UK	3	0
USA	2	0
Vietnam	6	6
<b>Total applicants</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>63*</b>

\* Incomplete applications were counted in Year 1, but not Year 2. There were 93 applications in total for Year 2.



# Heidi Tan

PhD History of Art and Archaeology  
Singapore

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## Could you start by telling us a little about your academic and professional background?

I've been working for almost 20 years in Singapore at the Asian Civilisations Museum, where I was one of the founding curators when it opened in 1997. I had wanted to do a PhD for quite some time, but during the developmental stages of a new museum the first five to ten years are crucial, and it was proving difficult to find the time to take a sabbatical for further studies.

At the museum I was intimately involved in exhibitions on Southeast Asian Arts and Culture, and over the years I have been increasingly travelling across the region to neighbouring countries to forge agreements to curate exhibitions of their collections on a collaborative basis, and building a strong network.

I've been in charge of the Southeast Asian collections and have been building them up over the past 18 years. My portfolio was based largely on mainland Southeast Asia - that's the foundation I have built for myself, and I intend to pursue those interests on the PhD programme.

## How have you found your experience in the UK and at SOAS?

I did my MA here in 1995, so this is my second stay with SOAS. I had been working in the UK for a while before my first stretch at SOAS, and it was here that I met many young Singaporeans who would say to me "Where have you been? The museum field is blossoming and you should be back here" and I would say "Yes, yes, I'm coming, but I've been rather busy doing other things". So in a way it was SOAS that led me back to my roots in Singapore.

The PhD is obviously very different from the MA, and I have to say that I have really loved it this year. I'm able to work independently and just touch base now and then with my committee

when I need to, and I am relishing delving into the library. I still feel like I've thrown myself in at the deep end a little bit really, but I think the first year of a PhD will always feel a little like that - searching for the framework you're going to work with and searching for the right questions.

I've also done some formal study through a Burmese language class, which has been intensive but really fun. I hope that it will help with fieldwork in Myanmar; I think that language gives you immediate insights to the culture as well as inroads to finding out more.

## Could you tell us about your research topic and how your studies are progressing?

Progress is going well, and I've just written my 15,000 word upgrade paper. I was extremely thankful that, due to Alphawood's funding, I was actually able to do field work in my first year and could use three recent international exhibitions as a case study for the paper. In February I went to the US for the opening of the first major exhibition of Buddhist art from Myanmar displayed overseas at the Asia Society in New York. Following that, in April, I went to Germany to see two exhibitions on Myanmar in ethnographic museums. For the upgrade paper I wrote a comparison of the way that exhibits are framed in these different kinds of museums, with specific reference to Myanmar and Buddhist art.

The topic - of Myanmar going global - is likely going to be a chapter in my final thesis, but my aim now is to go to Myanmar and see how Buddhist art is curated there.

## What is your interest in this area of study, and why is it important to you?

I got interested in Buddhist art through the work I did at the museum. We did an exhibition in 2012 on the Buddhist art of Thailand, and I became fascinated with the multiplicity of religious

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practices, what some would call many ‘Buddhisms’, as well as styles of Buddhist art.

The mixture of both Buddhist and Hindu traditions, as well as elements of animism, throughout the region has resulted in a very rich and complex culture. And as I was trying to pick it all apart and select which objects we would put on display and write about them, I started to realise how limiting the conventional 200-word exhibition label is. I felt like there was a missing paragraph on that label: what do the local people from the places these objects come from think about them? These might be very ancient objects, but nonetheless there are contemporary practices that surround them today that are often overlooked. What these objects mean to local people today might have nothing to do with how they were seen in the 15th century when they were made, but they have a cultural relevance that is worth looking at. Things happen to objects throughout their lives and so new and equally interesting meanings develop over time.

So I wanted to spend more time within a culture talking to people and observing how they create meaning around ancient objects today in sacred contexts like temples or monasteries. What I have found in Thailand and in Myanmar was that many of these sacred spaces actually had museums where these objects were displayed for visitors to see. I found that no one had talked or written much about them, so there was a window there for some unique research.

#### **What are your plans for your future?**

I would like to spend time on projects in the region that benefit Singapore but also benefit the region.

I feel that there are a lot of curators in Singapore and we could be sharing what we know with our counterparts across Southeast Asia. The other countries are extremely rich culturally and their

collections are wonderful but Singapore is currently the only nation in the region that has purpose built museums and galleries that fulfil so-called “international standards”.

I am personally very interested in working on museum projects in Myanmar and other countries in the region. With another two years yet to go however, I am trying to keep my options open to the future while focussing on my work here.

#### **What impact has the scholarship had on your studies, and your life?**

First and foremost, it’s made the PhD a reality for me. From being a dream I harboured for many years, I now have this fantastic opportunity and I couldn’t have asked for more.

Engaging with colleagues from the region has been very helpful. I’m the only one doing a PhD but we’ve sat in lectures together, had meetings together, been together on outings and had many discussions about work and life. We’re getting to know each other as friends and gaining insights about our cultural differences and similarities.

Recently the Alphawood scholars organised a party to thank their teachers and to wish Elizabeth Moore well on her way to Myanmar. The scholars brought dishes of traditional food from their home nations, many of them prepared from scratch. The Alphawood scholars here are like an extended family and I think that’s the main thing that has struck me this year - the sense of camaraderie across the group. It’s really the fledgling stage of the network that Alphawood is trying to help us to build, and it’s great to see it coming together. The connections we are forming here are going to carry on into the future I’m sure.



# Suppawan Nongnut

MA Religious Arts of Asia  
Thailand

## Could you start by telling us a little about your academic and professional background?

I studied Art History in Thailand. Following graduation, I worked for Si Thep Historical Park from 2001-2004, and then from 2005-2008 as an assistant curator of Ban Chiang National Museum. From 2008 onwards I have been with the National Museum Bangkok, where I work as a junior curator. My job is to research objects relating to religion, particularly Buddhism and Hinduism.

I heard about the Alphawood Scholarships through a professional contact of mine - Heidi Tan - who is now the Alphawood PhD scholar. A year earlier, Heidi and I had worked together on exchanging exhibitions between the National Museum Bangkok and her Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore. Shortly afterwards my former Director, who is a friend of Professor Elizabeth Moore, spoke to me about the same opportunity. She said if I wanted to do it, she would speak to my Director General and recommend that he authorised my leave. So it seemed like everyone wanted me to take this scholarship!

So I wrote a proposal, but when I came back later and tried to read it through I found I could not understand my own English, and started to get quite worried. I was already concerned that I had little experience of speaking or understanding spoken English, but I had previously had no problem reading and writing. Now, after a long time of not using English, I was worried whether my language skills would be good enough for the UK education system. Thankfully, the English courses that the Alphawood Scholarship programme offers were a huge help. I'm really grateful to Alphawood for making those courses available, not many scholarship programmes would be so helpful. I am in a much better

position to start my MA, and I am feeling much more confident.

## How have you found your experience in the UK and at SOAS?

One thing I have learned here is a different way of thinking - critical thinking. In Thailand we always think within a narrow frame: the Thai point of view that is informed by our tradition and our culture. At SOAS we don't learn that way, we look at subjects from different perspectives. It's something I struggled with at first, but I have found it very rewarding and it has made me a better scholar.

A nice personal aspect for me has been the friendships I have formed with my Cambodian colleagues on the Alphawood programme. On the news at home we are constantly told of problems with the border between our countries, of tensions and disputes. But we can sit and talk about art, about archaeology, about life or anything. There's no problem; the problem is politics.

## Could you tell us about your area of study, and how your studies are progressing?

My area of interest is Southeast Asian art objects relating to religion - Buddhism and Hinduism. So when I came here I thought I should study the same area. But when I arrived and met with Professor Elizabeth Moore, she said - you already studied this in Thailand, you know so much already, why not bring another region into your studies? I thought this was an interesting idea and chose to look at Chinese, Korean and Tibetan art, none of which are taught in Thailand. I think this will actually be really useful.

Art is not pure; it does not recognise national boundaries in the same way that people do. The



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art people make is dependent on the beliefs and cultural values of people and people are always moving. From Dr Peter Sharrock I learned a lot about the maritime period, during which there was a great deal of trading and a lot of movement of people all over Asia. We are all interconnected, much more than many people in Thailand would like to admit. I think I can use the knowledge I have learned of other sorts of Asian art from countries surrounding Southeast Asia to provide a greater context and understanding of our own national and regional art.

**What is your interest in this area of study, and why is it important to you?**

Well, there is a story to that. My home province of Kanchanaburi, in the western region of Thailand, has a lot of archaeological sites and a lot of evidence of the prehistoric period. When I was just a kid my house was close to a river, and I would always walk along the beach on its shore. From time to time I would see interesting pebbles of unusual shapes and take them home. One day we had a school trip to the National Museum of Bangkok, where many years later I would work. It was the first time I had been outside my province. It was there that I saw one of my strange pebbles: it was a prehistoric tool! After that, whenever I walked along the beach I was always searching for more of these tools. From then, I was convinced that archaeology was what I wanted to do with my life. Without even meaning to, I had already become an archaeologist.

Of course my father disagreed. In Thailand, archaeologists are seen as people who are always away from home going on long trips away from their family. He said that this wasn’t suited to a woman! So I thought to myself that I would trick him. I said “OK I won’t study archaeology, I’ll study Art History for my major” while knowing that I could switch to archaeology after the first term.

But when I got there, I actually found that I really enjoyed Art History. The course was about art and ancient technology and those were the two things that had fascinated me about archaeology in the first place. So I changed my mind and stuck with art history.

A funny twist to the story is that later that year my father, who is a farmer, found a piece of ancient pottery when ploughing a field. He sent me a picture which I showed to my professor and he wanted to see it. This eventually led to an archaeological dig happening back at home, which my father found really exciting. After that, he was suddenly quite open to the idea of me studying archaeology - but this time it was me who wasn’t interested!

**What are your plans for your future?**

I see this MA as the beginning of my studies, and am interested in going on to take a PhD. I think what I am learning here will prepare me well for that. However, I will have to go back to work for at least a year first, or my father would have to pay for it, and I don’t think he would like that!

**What impact has the scholarship had on your studies, and your life?**

If I didn’t have the Alphawood scholarship, I couldn’t come here. First of all, we could not afford it. Secondly, I don’t know of any other scholarship programme that would accept someone of my level of English to a UK university, and offer to teach me the English skills I needed when I got here. That is really a really special thing to offer, for which I am so grateful.

Really I would just like to say a big thank you. It’s been a wonderful and extremely valuable experience for me, and I think that the programme is going to do a lot of good in the region.



# Duyen Nguyen

## MA History of Art and Archaeology Vietnam

### Could you start by telling us a little about your academic and professional background?

I work at the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture in my home country of Vietnam. The museum was built by the French 100 years ago and is dedicated to the sculpture of the Cham people.

After working at the Museum for several years I received a scholarship to pursue my first MA in Museology at New York University. While in New York, I did an internship at the Asia Society and after that at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where I helped prepare for the exhibition Lost Kingdoms.

After I graduated I returned home and to my job at the Department of Education of the Cham museum. My main responsibilities were to compile learning materials and organise school programs for K-12 students and to develop public programs. However, I realised that I had some gaps in my general knowledge of art history of the South and Southeast Asian region, and how it relates to Cham art. The Cham Museum also needs a professional curator to take charge of its collections. For both of these reasons, further education in Art History and Archaeology was something I felt could be of great benefit.

Through Stephen Murphy, a contact of mine who I worked with at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and is a SOAS alumnus, I found out about the Alphawood Scholarships programme. I recognised an opportunity to gain the knowledge and experience I needed to fill those gaps at the Cham Museum. I didn't know if I would be accepted, but I thought I should try and send my application in, and was very happy to be able to come here to study at SOAS thanks to the Alphawood Foundation.

### How have you found your experience in the UK and at SOAS?

The most valuable thing for me at SOAS is access to the library. Here at SOAS I can find a lot of really useful books that closely relate to my work in Vietnam, Cham art, and archaeology of Southeast Asia. Everything I need is in the library for me to access and I really love it there.

The second thing I have been impressed by is the level of expertise relating to arts and archaeology in Southeast Asia across the teaching staff here. Previously I had also thought about applying to Columbia and Cornell Universities in America, but when I looked at their faculty they really did not have experts in my area of interest that matched what SOAS offered.

### Could you tell us about your area of study, and how your studies are progressing?

I am currently working on my MA dissertation under the guidance of my supervisor, Professor Ashley Thompson. My research focuses on the biography of the *Đông Dương* bronze female deity, a devotional icon of Cham Buddhist art. This dissertation will be later developed into a chapter of my PhD thesis.

### Where does your interest in this subject come from; why is it important to you?

When I was in high school I had no idea what I wanted to do. I thought maybe I would be a journalist because I am good at writing. But the university in Vietnam where I could study journalism is far away from my hometown and my mum didn't let me go. So I majored in TESOL to teach English locally, however when I finished my undergraduate, I couldn't find any teaching position as there was no need for an English language teacher in my city. Then I applied to work at the department of Education of the Cham

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Museum. At first I was a gallery guide giving lectures to tourists and students who came to the museum. As time went by, my knowledge in Cham art was accumulated and my interest in this field continued to grow. I realised that I love the museum and I was very much inspired by the visitors who appreciated Cham art and culture as well as experts in field of Museology and Art History whom I had the chance to work with during their fieldwork in Vietnam. Today I feel proud of my museum and want to help it be better, and these studies are a part of that. So this career was not one I looked for or expected, but my love for it has grown and I know that this is what I want to do with my life now.

#### **What are your plans for your future?**

I have already been accepted onto the PhD here, but I have asked for a deferral as I need to go back to my Museum for a year first. I have a lot of projects waiting for me here, and it will also be useful to do some preparatory fieldwork for the PhD in Vietnam.

My long term goal is to be a professional curator for my museum and help it to develop. What the museum needs is someone who knows the collections intimately, knows about other collections in other museums in Southeast Asia, and has the network to connect them together and to collaborate to bring the rich culture and history of the Cham to the public and help run the museum in a professional way. I think with more education I can be that person.

People have asked me whether I would consider working in other countries, at other museums, but for me Vietnam is my home and I feel strongly attached to my country, to my hometown, my family and to my museum. I think if you have a strong emotional connection like that, you shouldn't question it.

#### **What impact has the scholarship had on your studies, and your life?**

On a personal level, the education I have received here has allowed me to connect the Cham art and culture to the broader Southeast Asian region and its history. Previously my focus was very narrow; I could talk all day about the Cham but did not have that broader context of where they fit into the history of our region.

It would have been impossible for me to come here, financially speaking. This scholarship is very unique, I have never before heard of a scholarship for students from our region that focuses on art and archaeology, and such a generous one that covers our travel and accommodation and living expenses. I really love this programme, and am very proud to be one of the first Alphawood Scholars.

The scholarship has also built a strong network already, just in its first year. People working in this field need to interact with each other, and we need to go abroad and gather knowledge on how museums are run in western countries and to take those lessons home. We need to connect the countries of Southeast Asia, but we also need to connect the West to the East.

I want to thank Mr Fred Eychaner for bringing me here to London, for letting me study here at SOAS, for giving me the knowledge and experience I need to help my work at home and develop my museum, and for opening me to the world outside Vietnam. So of course I want to say thank you, but those are just words. I hope that we scholars will also thank Mr Eychaner through our actions - through what we build for Southeast Asia after we graduate. That is the best way we can say thanks.



# Jackie Yoong

MA History of Art and Archaeology  
Singapore

## Could you start by telling us a little about your academic and professional background?

I have been working at the Singapore Asian Civilisations Museum, in the Peranakan department, for the past five years. The Peranakans are a Chinese diaspora group in Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore. About a year ago I spoke to the current Alphawood PhD Scholar Heidi Tan, who is my boss, about my future. While I really liked my job, having worked there for five years I wanted to do a sabbatical and asked her what she thought.

Heidi told me about the Alphawood Scholarships and encouraged me to apply. I thought - great! The only school I had wanted to go to was SOAS. I wanted to study Chinese ceramics in Southeast Asia and it is one of the best places you can study that topic. I was a Junior Curator focusing on research, exhibitions and acquisitions, and had visited a number of places in Europe and Southeast Asia on acquisitions business. I knew London was an amazing resource for Chinese ceramics - there are so many specialists who come through the city, so many top-class museums, and great exhibitions every year. Many specialists in the area studied at SOAS and would always recommend it as the place to go.

My Director has been very accommodating and has kept my job open for me, so I can return in October with new ideas, knowledge and networks gained through SOAS.

## How have you found your experience in the UK and at SOAS?

SOAS has been great and I have been especially impressed by the faculty and library. I had read some of the books of these academics and it was amazing to become their student and learn directly from them and their latest research. My supervisor is Dr Stacey Pierson, who is an expert

in Chinese ceramics. She is very encouraging and supportive; I've learned a lot from her. She wrote me a recommendation letter that helped secure a place in the competitive Smithsonian-Mellon Chinese Art Study Workshop in San Francisco, with a grant that funded my travel and expenses. It was the first time the conference was open to European institutions, and it says a lot that the two students (out of ten) from Europe are both SOAS students.

The Southeast Asian Academic Arts Programme (SAAAP) has been absolutely fantastic. The seminars Professor Ashley Thompson and Dr Peter Sharrock organised brought in some really big names across the southeast Asian academic and museum fields. These are people whose books you have read, and to have them come here and share their insights and address your questions was a great opportunity.

Another highlight of the year was the study trip to Paris, overseen by SAAAP academics Professor Ashley Thomson and Dr Christian Luczanits. Some highlights of the trip included meeting the Southeast Asian Curator for the Guimet - one of the top Asian art museums in the world - and visiting a special show of Southeast Asian Arts at the Palais de Tokyo, a leading contemporary arts museum, and meeting the curator there. The SAAAP is an impressive programme. We don't just have very generous scholarships for our individual studies, we have dedicated professors and a wide range of activities to help us make the most of our time at SOAS.

Finally, SOAS allows me to forge friendships with other students passionate about the arts. One of them is a part time student working at Christies London ( a leading auction house), and kindly offered the opportunity of a short two-week work attachment. The stint gave me a more holistic understanding of the art market.

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**Could you tell us about your area of study, and how your studies are progressing?**

I am on the MA History of Arts and Archaeology, with research interest in Chinese export ceramics and textiles to Southeast Asia. It’s been a good year and one of the key benefits for me is the close access to the British Museum. Dr Stacey Pierson covers objects in her lectures that are on display there, so afterwards we can go and study the actual pieces - which I often do immediately afterwards with the class fresh in my mind. That is not something I could do anywhere else and it’s been a very valuable part of my studies.

The British Museum also has a series of free lectures and tours by curators through the year which has been great for my studies, and also great for networking. One tour was given by the well-known Chinese ceramics curator Jessica Harrison Hall, and afterwards I introduced myself as an Alphawood Scholar and also on behalf of my museum back home. She invited me to give a talk on the collection we have on Singapore, at a workshop at the British Museum for specialists. Again, Stacey helped with my slides preparation. Several specialists attended and it was great to get feedback on my research and our museum collection.

**What is your interest in this area of study, and why is it important to you?**

I am passionate about studying Chinese export objects and museums. As descendant of a large Chinese diaspora to Southeast Asia, I am interested in exploring the hybrid cultures and arts of this community who settled overseas. Recent literature of this area also point to many fascinating possibilities for research and appreciation.

**What are your plans for your future?**

In October I will return to work at the museum in

Singapore. I used to work solely in the Peranakan department, but will try to learn and contribute to other departments when I return. The more I study at SOAS the more I realise that with a hybrid culture like the Peranakan, the art itself is reflective of influences from the other Southeast Asian cultures that the diaspora has moved through. This has led me to be drawn to discover more about art of Southeast Asia and to broaden my horizons. I am also in discussion with the museum to possibly curate an exhibition on my thesis topic. Finally, I stand ready to help SOAS-Alphawood Foundation in possible outreach and educational initiatives in the region in future.

**What impact has the scholarship had on your studies, and your life?**

A lot of scholarships for Southeast Asia exclude Singapore because they think everyone can afford it, but I really couldn’t have come here without the Alphawood scholarship. It’s been a transformational life experience, and career-wise the one year here has strengthened my specialist knowledge, given me precious time to read, write and be guided by the best experts. I’ve also been able to network extensively with people who may be able to come to Singapore and do something with us at the museum. My visits to, and photo documentation of, many top class museums and exhibitions in London and Europe have also given plenty of new ideas for curation and design.

On a personal level, I would like to say to Mr Eychaner that he has changed at least one person’s life - mine! But beyond that, this programme he established will have a genuine and permanent effect on the whole of the Southeast Asian arts scene. The scholarship is only for people who will return to the region, use what they have learned to advance their fields, and use the networks we have built to advance cooperation and collaboration across the region. It’s a really powerful vision.



# Kelvin Chun Sum Chuah

## Postgraduate Certificate in Asian Art Malaysia

### Could you start by telling us a little about your academic and professional background?

I was initially trained as a painter at LaSalle College of the Arts, Singapore where I was conferred a degree from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. After graduation I did some gallery work and art enrichment programmes in Singapore before returning to Malaysia. Back in Kuala Lumpur I read for an MA in Visual Art, specialising in History of Art. It is only in recent times that History of Art is offered as a full degree at the postgraduate level in the country. Ten years ago, some professors and lecturers influenced and guided me towards art historical studies and from year 2013 to 2014, I was privileged to be involved in the development of a programme for Southeast Asian History of Art. As a young researcher and art writer, I came to realise that I need greater background knowledge on earlier art historical studies of the region. A friend of mine who is a SOAS alumnus introduced the Alphawood Scholarships to me, and I thought that it was a great opportunity to bridge that gap. I saw that I could learn more about historical Hindu and Buddhist art of the region and of Asia, so it fit perfectly. It is the missing link.

### How have you found your experience in the UK and at SOAS?

I arrived in April in time to join the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art for its Southeast Asian module, while I believe that most of the other Alphawood Scholars had started last fall.

I have been a student most of my life, pursuing academic programmes in different countries. With regards to art historical studies, SOAS is brilliant. The programme I attended with course mates from around the world has greatly enlivened and

enriched my academic and personal experience. Networking opportunities with my fellow course mates would benefit future collaborations for sure. The SOAS library is great in terms of the selection of the titles. The British Library is only a short distance away when necessary. Thankfully the scholarship is generous enough that, when needs be, I have been able to purchase some key texts for essay writing and for future reference.

### Could you tell us about your area of study, and how your studies are progressing?

Programme-wise SOAS has also been really good. The lecturers are very knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They also invite many guest lecturers who are experts in different areas. We look forward to study tours and artifact handling sessions to reinforce what we learn in the classrooms. I think this really broadens the horizons of the students, and I look forward to every lecture. I would not exchange the experience I have had here for anything; it's been really good.

### Where does your interest in this subject come from; why is it important to you?

Although I am now fully committed to becoming an art researcher with foci on Asian Art, my training in history and fine art informs my practice. Since my undergraduate days, History of Art forms an important component of my foundation and practice. In art schools, we have been trained in the canons of Western Art History. I was quietly disturbed by the fact that some of us working in Asia have very little knowledge or intrinsic understanding of Asian Art. Furthermore, most histories today are shaped and conformed to nationalistic interests, making it more challenging to shape regional histories. I think it is really

**“It’s a visionary programme, and this is just the first step of it. I really hope that my fellow scholars and I will be able to continue to work towards that vision long after graduation as the network continues to grow and develop.”**

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important for people to understand their cultural heritage beyond the confines of national perimeters and to expand their trajectories to regional perspectives. In the region of Southeast Asia the most developed country is Singapore and the governing bodies have invested significantly into the arts and the museum scene. But for developing countries like Malaysia, the arts are perhaps secondary to the sciences. Some may see the arts as a lesser option. I believe that it is really important for us to remember our history and to preserve our culture. Not as a metanarrative but as important points of reference to invigorate modern and contemporary frameworks.

#### **What are your plans for your future?**

My objective is to stay with the Alphawood programme as it is a project I really believe in. Hopefully, I may continue with a PhD here at SOAS with support from Alphawood. I began my candidacy for the PhD some years ago and it is currently on hiatus. I intend to complete it with the knowledge I gained from the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art.

Beyond that, I aim to work on Digital Art Histories for Southeast Asian Art. I think the contacts that I have made on the programme will be a great help with this

#### **What impact has the scholarship had on your studies, and your life?**

We are all here because of the Alphawood Foundation and their funding. The opportunities they have given to us, as individuals are really significant. I cannot thank them enough for that. Indeed, the steep learning curve here will help me tremendously. On a personal level, I am really looking forward to the exponential possibilities

after we graduate. The candidates already formed networks and I envision great potential for us to do some interesting things together when we return to our organisations spread across the region. It’s very exciting. Having been in the gallery and arts scene back in Malaysia, there does seem to be an unseen border after Thailand. I think that people from the islands seem to have more of a network, and the mainland countries have their own. We seem to be detached from each other. My hope is that the Alphawood network will act as a bridge to bring the region together.

I really want to say a big thank you to Mr Eychaner and the Alphawood Foundation. This project has helped me tremendously, and given me the opportunity to learn about art history of the region that I had spent a long time searching for. It’s a visionary programme, and this is just the first step of it. I really hope that my fellow scholars and I will be able to continue to work towards that vision long after graduation as the network continues to grow and develop



# Thu Ya Aung

## Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art Myanmar

### Could you start by telling us a little about your academic and professional background?

I have studied archaeology to MA level back in my home country of Myanmar. After graduating I collaborated with other alumni and students of Yangon University to form an organisation - the Myanmar Archaeology Association. There is no government organisation or NGO in my country for archaeology and the protection of cultural heritage, and the mission of our organisation is to fulfil that role. We focus on promoting archaeology in our country, and aim to collaborate with the government and other organisations to implement a cultural resource management plan in Myanmar.

When we first formed the organisation, some government ministers didn't agree with it, and couldn't see the benefit of we were setting out to do. But now they understand our attitude and the nature of our activities much better, and the government has recognised our legitimacy. They have taken on our policy recommendations and are discussing possible changes in the law to help aid the conservation of our heritage.

We are now in the process of registering the association as a recognised organisation that can officially work with the government, and it is looking like we will succeed in this, so it is a very exciting time for us.

I am the Secretary General of our organisation, and part of my role is to seek collaboration with international scholars in archaeology, including Dr Elizabeth Moore among other recognised experts and specialists. When I was doing some research with Dr Moore, who is also one of one of the advisors of our organisation, she recommended I apply to this scholarship. Her thinking was that

this would lend more weight to our academic credentials, help promote the organisation, and also allow me to form a network of contacts across Southeast Asia. It sounded like a great opportunity.

### How have you found your experience in the UK and at SOAS?

Before I came to SOAS I assumed that the programme would be more technical and scientific regarding archaeology. Although this year has been focused on English language skills for me, I know through my fellow Alphawood Scholars that actually it is much more theoretically focused at SOAS. I did not expect that, but actually I think that it will be really useful for my academic study. I will learn a lot about theory and ideas that I would have no access to in Myanmar.

One big problem for education in Myanmar is that we don't have access to many academic books. Not only do we not have them in our libraries, we can't even buy them in from outside as there is no international shipping system. That places some severe limits on the academic studies people in my country can carry out. At SOAS there is a great library, and I can buy any book I need that is not there very easily compared to at home.

Since I have arrived at the UK I have been buying as many academic books on archaeology as I can. My intention is to take them back to Myanmar and start a library for my organisation, so future scholars in my country can borrow them, and have access to these resources as well.



**“I really believe that the scholarship will help the Myanmar Archaeology Association to grow and to achieve more and I am very grateful to the Alphawood Foundation for this.”**

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**Could you tell us a bit about your year academically; how your studies are progressing?**

I think I have improved a lot in terms of my English language skills this year. My IELTS score for listening and writing has gone from 4.5 to 6.5, and I feel ready for my programme which is due to start in September. I hope my English will continue to improve over the course of the Diploma.

**What are your plans for your future?**

Of course my focus will continue to be on the Myanmar Archaeological Association after the Diploma. My hope is that my studies here will help lend us more credibility and let us do more.

You may know of Dr Than Htun - a very famous historian and one of the founders of the academy of archaeology in my country who also carried out some research at SOAS. He is the last person from my country to graduate in archaeology from a UK university. So I think that my having a British qualification will add academic weight to my organisation and people will take notice of us.

While the Diploma may just be a piece of paper, I am focussed on getting as much out of my time here as possible. I already mentioned my buying books to take home and provide resources to future generations, and another valuable aspect is the networks I am forming. This includes the other Alphawood Scholars, but I have worked to build networks beyond SOAS as well. For instance, I have been able to meet with Dr Alexandra Green, a curator at the British Museum who knows a lot about Burmese antiquity, and I hope my organisation will be able to work with her in the future.

**What impact has the scholarship had on your studies, and your life?**

I've spoken a lot about the benefits for my organisation, I really believe that the scholarship will help the Myanmar Archaeology Association to grow and to achieve more and I am very grateful to the Alphawood Foundation for this. From my own point of view, it is very nice that I can focus entirely on my studies and not have to worry about money, about accommodation, or about travel. This financial security allows us to pay more consideration to our studies and have fewer distractions.

A really nice aspect of this experience for me has been to meet and get to know other scholars in this area from many countries across the region, to speak with them and share ideas. After studying, we have to go back to our homelands, but we want to keep in touch with each other. We need to form an Alphawood Scholars Network that will grow over the years as new scholars come through. We need to find some research projects that we can collaborate on and ensure that we continue connected. I'm really looking forward to seeing this develop over the next few years.



# Socheat Nhean

## MA History of Art and Archaeology Cambodia

### Could you start by telling us a little about your academic and professional background?

In 1999 I was lucky enough to receive a state scholarship in Cambodia to study Archaeology at the Royal University of Fine Art. Following graduation, I started to volunteer at the Documentation Centre of Cambodia - a research institute which is dedicated to documenting the crimes of the Khmer Rouge regime. Then in 2007 I went to America to study postgraduate Anthropology at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, which I know is also the birthplace of Alphawood Foundation founder Mr Fred Eychaner!

In 2009 I graduated and returned to Cambodia where I was appointed as Editor in Chief of Searching for the Truth magazine, a publication of the Documentation Centre, which focuses on the crimes of Khmer Rouge and researching the genocide that occurred under that regime.

So why am I here? Well the Documentation Centre plans to build a museum, a research centre and a school. The museum will exhibit art which aims to reconcile the nation following the war. I am here specifically to study art, conflict, concept of memory and the meaning of memorial monument and to take what I can learn home to help inform the development of our museum project.

The Alphawood programme at SOAS originated from the personal interest of Southeast Asian Art of the Foundation founder. That's why I am here at SOAS - to help the Foundation founder to achieve his vision by growing the studies research of Cambodian and Southeast Asian arts for the benefit of the region and the world.

### How have you found your experience in the UK and at SOAS?

I have had a great time at SOAS, and London is the best place for me, I have loved London since I was very young, since I started learning English. When I had the opportunity to come here it was like a dream come true. I have learned a lot since coming here, not only on my degree course, but about British culture as well. I found that SOAS is a community of international students; the Department of the History of Art and Archaeology itself is really a great place for the study of Southeast Asian Arts. I love being here in London. It is important to note that to study about one's own culture, one needs to be away from one's home country so that one can have better view and see wider perspective on the culture and art, and see how others views that culture. Some people said that 'if you want to study art and culture, come to Europe.' I agree with this - art and museums are everywhere in London. It is the right place for me.

### Could you tell us about your area of study, and how your studies are progressing?

I have taken a number of courses on the programme. Art Theory has been a very interesting, but very challenging course for me, as it is the first time I have been exposed to such ideas. I also study Buddhist Art under Dr Peter Sharrock. The main focus of my learning has been on Professor Ashley Thompson's course - Memory and the Memorial: Southeast Asia and Its Others. The course looks at memorials in Buddhist culture. This class is really important to the work we are trying to do with the museum back in Cambodia. In many ways the museum is a memorial to the war, a place people will go to

**“Already in one year, the first cohort have formed a group who are dedicated to staying in touch, working together and collaborating on some future projects. We need to build this network and without Alphawood we couldn’t do it.”**

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heal themselves from trauma, depression and other physiological problems. This is a new concept of memorial for Cambodia. Therefore, studying the concept of Buddhism and Memorial is very crucial and I expect to bring this concept home to improve the future Sleuk Rith Institute. Most Cambodians do not trust psychiatrists and psychologists and Cambodia does not have clear terms for them. However, they seek psychological healing from Buddhist temples. In this sense, I want to link the concept of art of Buddhism in my museum and building concept so that the Sleuk Rith Institute could be a place where people can get psychological relief and education.

#### **What are your plans for your future?**

Following graduation, I will return home to Cambodia and apply the knowledge I have accumulated here to the Documentation Centre’s museum project. At the same time, I will try to create some small projects to help the studies of Cambodian art and culture.

#### **What impact has the scholarship had on your studies, and your life?**

The Alphawood Scholarships programme is really good, I can’t express that enough. From a personal point of view, I could not come to the UK to study without this funding. In Cambodia, we don’t have many experts in arts and archaeology, especially from the UK, which is one of the culturally oldest countries in the world. The Alphawood programme is a link that connects Southeast Asian experts of art and culture together and I am convinced that in the future the link will be stronger.

In a broader sense, I think that Southeast Asia as a region really does need a network of academics and experts working in this area, and the Alphawood programme is helping us to create that. Already in one year, the first cohort have formed a group who are dedicated to staying in touch, working together and collaborating on some future projects. We need to build this network and without Alphawood we couldn’t do it. I hope in future years of the programme we will get students from every nation in the region, and that the network can continue to grow.

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#### **An update from Socheat**

In early October Socheat contacted fellow Alphawood Scholars, SAAAP and SOAS staff with the following message, shared here with his permission:

**“I am doing well at home and resumed my work at the Documentation Centre of Cambodia/Sleuk Rith Institute on 1 October, less than a week after I arrived. I am in charge of the Media Centre of the Sleuk Rith Institute, where I am responsible for the press, media, communication and publication for the whole Institute. Another duty in the field of art is to organize exhibitions, host lectures, music and performing art and in the building called Hall of Contemporary Art.**

**My time at SOAS and London was a great moment in life and it has changed my life in some ways.”**



# Samnang Kim

MA Art and Archaeology  
Cambodia

## Could you start by telling us a little about your academic and professional background?

Let me start from my bachelor degree - I graduated from general business management in 2001 and got a job in the Siem Reap province working at the Angkor Wat temple complex with the authority for the protection and preservation of world heritage sites.

During that time I received a lot of training from experts from abroad in a variety of areas - tourism, architecture, management and also archaeology. They try to persuade every trainee to understand all aspects relating to the Angkor Wat site. We train on-site because it is a very quiet environment for study, and also so that we all become very familiar with the environment of the site, feel connected to it, and understand the importance of what we are learning as it relates to the temple complex.

In 2006-7 I attained a scholarship to study in Tochigi prefecture in Japan for a year to learn how to preserve world heritage sites by using advanced technologies such as Geographic Information Systems and Remote Sensing. These new technologies are leading to some significant advancements in archaeology. It was very technical professional training where we worked on sites and I learned a lot from it.

In 2010 I got another scholarship, from the Rockefeller Foundation, to study an MA in Southeast Asian Studies in Thailand. My dissertation generated some interest from the head of the programme and I was asked to publish it as a book, which was released in 2011. Three years later it was reprinted by Lambert Press, it is called *Along the Royal Road: From Kol to Phnom Rung* and is still available on Amazon. It discusses how, using new techniques in mapping, we can analyse programs of urbanisation from the court of the Angkorian Empire from the 9th to 13th century A.D.

From my work I knew Dr Elizabeth Moore, we had done some surveys together, and she contacted me to tell me about the Alphawood Scholarships. She thought I could get a lot out of the programme here that could help inform my work. I was interested as it is very rare for the UK to have such a scholarship, focused as it is on Southeast Asia. I thought - why not give it a try? I was not very confident as my English language is quite poor when it comes to speaking and writing, but I applied and said: if you give me a chance, I believe I can do it. They came back to me and offered to train me in English language for a year and then to join SOAS on the MA programme. I had originally applied for the PhD, but their recommendation was to take the one year MA first and develop my abilities in academic writing in English. I thought that sounded like a good idea.

I'm always very open to let my career develop based on the opportunities that come to me. I started as the business guy, then moved into the technology side, and then to looking at history from an academic point of view. I have always focused on taking every opportunity to learn new things that I can, and how these very different disciplines can all be tied to my core task of the preservation of cultural heritage.

## How have you found your experience in the UK and at SOAS?

So far I have really enjoyed the ELAS and pre-session courses. I've learned a new way of writing, a new way of reading and approaching a subject. But what has been really good is that they let you take an academic option as well, I have selected humanities, which has been really interesting. I'm not just learning about Southeast Asia, I'm learning about the world - a whole new world - right here. It's fascinating to me. What are our differences, what are our similarities, how are we different and why? These are questions that I have really enjoyed thinking about this year.

**“We are not a wealthy region, but there are many individuals in the region who have the ability to succeed if they are given an opportunity... I hope that the Alphawood Foundation know just how grateful we all are for their support and generosity.”**

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**Could you tell us about your area of study, and how your studies are progressing?**

The MA I will be taking is in Art and Archaeology, and I have already been discussing my options for the courses I will take with my supervisor Professor Ashley Thompson.

Something I am currently in discussion over is whether it might be possible for me to take one of my courses outside of SOAS. There is a course at UCL which would be very useful to my work in the technologies I studied in Japan. I hope that is going to be possible, as I would not be able to access that opportunity back in Cambodia. I am writing a proposal for this to present to the faculty, and then we will have to wait and see.

From the theoretical side, there are some courses at SOAS I am keen on taking. One is on Indian temples, another is an anthropology course and then there is a course on monuments and sculpture in Angkor taught by Dr Peter Sharrock, which is obviously very closely related to my work. In terms of the Indian temples course, we know that there is a great influence on Southeast Asia from Indian culture, but I don't have much knowledge about it. I feel that if I got some knowledge of Indian architectural art then it might help me to make a comparison. What are the similarities and differences between our temples at Angkor Wat and Indian temples? It's a question I am keen to explore.

I think if I can bring all of these things together then I can get to a much deeper understanding of how things were in those ancient times, and better understand where we have come from. My vision is to draw together the history, the architecture, the anthropology, the external influences - all underpinned by scientific data from these new technologies. I would like my dissertation to look at the Angkor empire from all of these perspectives. It's not a simple project, but I will try.

**What are your plans for your future?**

Obviously after the MA I will return to my job at Angkor Wat site, continue my projects and share what I have learned to help guide our conservation programme. I also hope to offer my experience to the Royal University of Phnom Penh; I will get in touch with them and see if there is a way I could offer to share the knowledge I have with their students through some seminars or lectures. I will also keep in touch with SOAS and look for opportunities for collaboration.

Alphawood are trying to establish a network through Southeast Asia, and we Alphawood scholars will play an important part in that by staying in touch, communicating and collaborating. I am very much committed to that goal.

**What impact has the scholarship had on your studies, and your life?**

This scholarships programme is obviously a huge benefit to the students who have been lucky enough to receive funding from it. SOAS is a very renowned institution in the region and it is a great opportunity for any Southeast Asian student to be able to come here, get a lot of knowledge, a lot of experience, and achieve a qualification to take home with them. It is very hard to see how we could come here and pay for ourselves. Life here is expensive, studying here is expensive, even travelling here is beyond the reach of most. We are not a wealthy region, but there are many individuals in the region who have the ability to succeed if they are given an opportunity. This is especially true of the fields of arts and culture, where in our region there are very few scholarship opportunities. I hope that the Alphawood Foundation know just how grateful we all are for their support and generosity.



# Swe Zin Myint

MA Art and Archaeology  
Myanmar

## Could you start by telling us a little about your academic and professional background?

My name is Swe Zin and I am from Myanmar. I am a tutor with the department of Archaeology at Mandalay University. I have been a tutor for two years and my qualifications are a BA, which I finished in 2009, and an MA which I completed the following year in 2010 - both in Archaeology.

Before I came here, I was studying towards my PhD at Yangon University. When the chance to come here on this scholarship was presented to me, I suspended my PhD in order to take up this opportunity.

I heard about the scholarship in 2012, a professor of mine invited Professor Elizabeth Moore to my university to give a lecture. She told us about this scholarship programme and afterwards my professor introduced me to her and she encouraged me to apply if I was interested. So I applied and was very happy to be offered the chance to study here on this programme.

For the past two terms I have been on the ELAS course to improve my written and spoken English, and then moved onto the pre-session course, which is teaching me how to use English language in a formal academic context. In the 2015/16 academic year I will progress to the MA programme.

## How have you found your experience in the UK and at SOAS?

To be honest, I really don't like the UK weather! At first I also found the culture of your society to be very strange and difficult to understand. The first thing I found unusual is that in the accommodation men and women were together in the same flat. In my country they would always be separate. I could not sleep well for the first few days, every time I heard a male voice outside my

room I would suddenly wake up! It was very strange. I also missed my family. In Myanmar we are much less individualistic than Westerners, everyone takes care of each other, and at first I felt quite alone when I arrived here. Now I have been here for some months I have become more comfortable.

SOAS is very different to my University at home as well, but in a very positive way. The average class size at SOAS is between 12 and 15, back at home the average class has 50 students in. At home a student cannot ask any questions in class as the lecture would be interrupted too often. At SOAS the lecturers actually encourage us to ask questions and discuss things in classes, which is really good and I feel like I learn more. The small classes also mean that the teachers often see when I am having trouble understanding what they are saying, and will always make sure we are all following before moving on. The teachers really take care of us here.

## Could you tell us a bit about your year academically; how your studies are progressing?

The ELAS course was really useful for me, it has improved my language skills a lot, and shown me how to approach a passage and pick up the key information from it easily. I think the biggest improvement I have made is in my understanding of grammar. I used to make a lot of grammatical mistakes when I wrote in English, and I've improved a lot over the past year in that area.

In my country our course is actually in English when it comes to reading and writing, so I was not starting from the beginning, but I had never had to speak English or understand spoken English. When I first came here I was very unconfident and quite scared of trying to speak English, but now after less than a year here I feel that I can speak quite well. I've really improved a lot.

**“I am very thankful to the Alphawood Foundation. This has been a life changing experience for me, and I think it will be of value to my students and my country.”**

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When I start the MA, I will continue to focus on archaeology. In my previous studies, my main area of interest was Neolithic stone tools, but as there is no expert professor on this subject at SOAS, I have decided to look instead at Burmese palm leaf manuscripts of the history of Buddha's life. There are a number of examples in the British Library and British Museum close to SOAS, and the teaching expertise is here as well.

**Where does your interest in this topic come from; why is it important to you?**

I have always been very interested in history. When it comes to the palm leaf manuscripts I will be studying on the MA, what I find particularly interesting is charting the changing writing style over time between the inscriptions. I find the evolution of writing style over time to be fascinating.

**What are your plans for your future?**

I intend to continue the PhD I started at Yangon University, but I have decided I would like to finish it abroad, ideally here at SOAS. It took me a long time to get settled here, and if I went somewhere else I would have to start all over again.

For me it is very difficult as this is the first time I have ever left my country. Even in Myanmar when I left to study I would try and go home often as I missed my family, so this has been a very big change for me. But my family are really pleased I am doing this. My mother is a veterinary, but also an associate professor in veterinary studies, and she has always encouraged me to make the most of educational opportunities. She is a very strong person - I know in her mind that she misses me, but she won't say she misses me!

**What impact has the scholarship had on your studies, and your life?**

If I did not get this scholarship I could not study abroad. We are not a wealthy family and could not afford for me to study abroad with our own finances. This was a great opportunity for me as in my country archaeology is not a very popular subject and the courses are not as good. By studying here I will gather much more knowledge and experience and reach a much higher level of education. When I return to teaching in Myanmar, my students will benefit from this and archaeology in Myanmar will improve as a result. In this way, the scholarship will allow me to contribute to the development of archaeology in Myanmar.

While I have been learning here, I have been paying close attention to teaching techniques and course structure, and taking notes. When I return to teaching I will present what I have discovered to the university and try to convince them that we could learn from this. Of course in my country we are very centralised, so I don't expect this will be easy, but I will try and I will keep on trying. It is strange for me to say this. I think when I first came here in some ways I was quite a shy person, but through this experience I feel that I have become stronger. When I first came here I found it hard to talk to other people, and when there was a conflict I would always back down and stay quiet, but now I am much more determined and confident in my point of view!

I am very thankful to the Alphawood Foundation. This has been a life changing experience for me, and I think it will be of value to my students and my country. I hope that they continue to support the programme. I was lucky, but I know many students at home are just as qualified and as deserving of this opportunity, but they cannot afford to do this on their own.



# Liliek Suhardjono

## Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art Indonesia

### Could you start by telling us a little about your academic and professional background?

I studied my undergraduate in Jakarta in Indonesia in Visual Communication and Design, which is essentially a graphic design course. After I graduated I worked for a while for a graphic design studio and then moved to an advertising company, but during that time I also taught as a part time lecturer at the university I am an alumni of - Universitas Bina Nusantara. You see in Indonesia the academic standard is not that high so even though I am only educated to undergraduate level, I am qualified to teach.

A few years later I got my Masters in International Performance Research. The remit of the programme was quite broad in what could be considered 'performance' and students looked at topics as varied as the theatre, politics and performance art. I was looking at popular culture, particularly Korean pop music and Indonesian television.

Following that I returned to teaching in Indonesia, and it was then that I learned of the Alphawood Scholarships. I found out about the programme from a Facebook group I belong to where various funding opportunities for scholarships are shared. I thought it sounded like a great opportunity for me, as a Southeast Asian with a love of the arts, and was very grateful to be accepted to the programme.

### How have you found your experience in the UK and at SOAS?

On the scholarship, SOAS offers three options - the PhD, MA and Postgraduate Diploma. Well, the PhD was too big for what I needed, so it came down to the other two. I already have an MA and could have done another one, but having looked

carefully at the programmes, I decided that the Postgraduate Diploma would be the most useful to me.

As I mentioned, I am a lecturer who often feels lacking when it comes to my depth of knowledge. I felt that the diploma could provide me with a solid background in Asian arts that could benefit my students.

The course is very intense, but not in a bad way. We learn so much packed into such a short period of time, it is hard work but very rewarding and exciting - a whole new world. Looking back, I definitely made the right choice going for the diploma over the MA, I have gained so much information to bring back to my students - sometimes more than I feel that I can absorb, but I'm just about managing! I think after I have finished the course I will keep on reading about everything we have been taught, and continue to improve my understanding.

### Could you tell us about your area of study, and how your studies are progressing?

For my first module I took the course on Indian Art, which was interesting. I am not that into Indian art, but their architecture is beautiful, and I felt I needed to know more about it due to the Indian influence on my region. The next module I took was the module on Chinese art. Three months for Chinese art, with so many dynasties and so many famous artworks? I was afraid! But because the diploma was structured so well, they made it manageable, and I really enjoyed it. The final module was on Southeast Asia and of course I was very excited as this is our culture, our core. I couldn't wait to learn more, especially about my own country. Of course as it is a region with so many countries it could really just provide a broad overview, from the point of view of passing this



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knowledge onto my students, it is probably just about the right level of depth.

**What are your plans for your future?**

I have been considering this a lot recently. Do I want to do more education? I don't think that there is a case that I need to; with what I have learned here already I can offer a lot more to my students back home than I could before. The question is what I want for the future.

I have really enjoyed learning about art history, and the intense and compressed nature of the diploma has really made me want to learn more, and go into further depth. Another MA would be something that I would really enjoy doing, and if I want to be serious in this field and make a worthwhile contribution to my country through research then I guess I have to.

But one thing I am decided on is that if I do more education, it won't be now. I need to go back first, continue with my job and have a good think about my future.

**What impact has the scholarship had on your studies, and your life?**

It's had a huge impact on me, it would be impossible for me to be here without it. I know that Mr Eychaner studied on the programme that I have just taken, and I can understand how it could inspire a passion in someone to do more for Southeast Asian Arts. There is so much there, so much to learn and discover and a real lack of scholarship around the area. These scholarships will make a difference. My message to the Alphawood Foundation would be to say that what they do is really, really meaningful for us and for our countries. It's really amazing. Thank you.!

**"I know that Mr Eychaner studied on the programme that I have just taken, and I can understand how it could inspire a passion in someone to do more for Southeast Asian Arts. There is so much there, so much to learn and discover and a real lack of scholarship around the area."**



## Sathal Khun

### MA History of Art and Archaeology Cambodia

#### Could you start by telling us a little about your academic and professional background?

I graduated from the Faculty of Archaeology at the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh in Cambodia. Following graduation I started working for the National University of Cambodia, which is actually the building just next door to the university. At the beginning of my time at the museum, I worked in the Inventory Office of the museum. I also involved in communications, training, researching and preparing the exhibition. As we have quite a small staff at the museum, so everyone helps out a bit with everything through the year and I have developed quite a broad experience of the running of a museum. Just a few months before I left for my study in London, I moved to the Education Office.

I learnt about the Alphawood Scholarships programme from H.E Hab Touch, he was at that time Director General of Cultural Heritage for Cambodia, and was a former director of the museum. He told me that he had known about this scholarship programme from Dr. Peter Sharrock. I also got strong encouragement to apply for this scholarship from my current museum's director, Mr. Kong Vireak. It sounded really interesting, as in Cambodia there are few opportunities for scholarships relating to culture and museums. I was so lucky to learn of the scholarship, and to have been awarded it. This is a unique opportunity for me.

#### How have you found your experience in the UK and at SOAS?

I came here in January and commenced two terms on the ELAS course. I am currently taking the pre-session course. In the 2015/16 academic year I will begin to study towards a History of Art and Archaeology MA.

The ELAS course has been really useful for my

writing and presentation skills. I have improved so much in a short space of time. Another really nice part of it is that you can also take another course on the side, and I took a humanities course. It lets us use those language skills we are working on to discuss things in the seminars and increase our confidence. The teachers here really care about the progress of the students, and that is very nice.

A unique aspect of this scholarship programme is that they provide us with an opportunity to take supplementary English course here in order to get to the appropriate level to enter the MA course - which was always my obstacle to furthering my education to MA level. I am very happy that the programme funded this training for me.

When it comes to SOAS, I have been really impressed with the library here, where I can access a huge range of books relevant to my studies at any time and I also can access many online resources through SOAS library website. In Cambodia there can be a real problem with finding the books you need, but here they are available to us whenever we need them.

Another thing I have loved about my time at SOAS so far is that all of the students are from different countries, so when we discuss a topic there are so many different perspectives and ideas. It's truly an international school.

#### Could you tell us about your area of study, and how your studies are progressing?

I am interested in Buddhist Art. I have already selected the courses I will study in the first two terms which are related to Buddhist Arts and Museum Studies. I am going to look at Buddhist art, and will try to use objects from my museum back home as the central focus of my studies. I have not selected the precise title for my

**“My life goal is to do whatever I can to help to preserve Cambodian culture and to transfer what I have learnt from school and from work experiences to the next Cambodian generation. We still need more people in this field.”**

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dissertation yet, but it will definitely be focused on Buddhist art in Cambodia.

**Where does your interest in your area come from; why is it important to you?**

I am influenced by my father, who was formerly a Director of the museum, and when I grew up there were always a lot of books on culture, art and history around me. In Cambodia the faculty of archaeology does not just focus on the technical aspects of excavation, there is an equal focus on history of art in general and of Cambodia, linguistic subjects, anthropology, and some basic museum studies as well.

**What are your plans for your future?**

I plan to go back to Cambodia and continue working for my museum. Another ambition is to teach at the Royal University of Fine Arts where I graduated from. My life goal is to do whatever I can to help to preserve Cambodian culture and to transfer what I have learnt from school and from work experiences to the next Cambodian generation. We still need more people in this field.

In terms of the museum field, the National Museum of Cambodia itself as same as the provincial museums throughout Cambodia need to be improved in many areas. In most museums there are lack of educational information for the visitors, and I think that prevents local people being interested in museums and seeing them as a place where we can go to learn about our history. I'd like to help change that.

Rather than just rely on what I will learn academically on the MA, I have been taking the time to visit as many museums as I can in the UK, and there are a lot in London. I've been noting how exhibitions are presented and gathering ideas. I'll take these ideas back home with me and

see what we can implement in Cambodia to improve our museums and make them more popular with local people.

**What impact has the scholarship had on your studies, and your life?**

I feel that this is a very generous scholarship. It is actually the only scholarship I have come across that gave me the opportunity to take some English course first before taking the IELTS to meet the university's requirement. That this scholarship offers the ability to train our language skills, and then fund our studies, is really quite unique and it will allow a lot of good candidates to join the programme at SOAS who would never have had the chance otherwise.

I think this will have a real impact on the field in Southeast Asia. By removing the language barrier, the programme accepts people who are best placed to have an impact. These people will go home and spread that knowledge as broadly as possible. That is a more sustainable approach for the future.

Another important part is the fact that as well as being a scholarship programme, it is the beginning of what could be a very powerful network across the region. We will all stay in touch and collaborate and communicate.

I would like to say to Mr Fred Eychaner and the Alphawood Foundation that they have not just helped me personally, they are also helping the whole of Southeast Asia to preserve our culture and history, and to find the common history and culture between our individual nations. I really don't have enough words to describe how impressed by this I am, or how grateful I am to them for what they are helping us to achieve.



# Su Lat Win

MA Art and Archaeology  
Myanmar

## Could you start by telling us a little about your academic and professional background?

Before I came to SOAS I was at Yangon University in my home country of Myanmar, where I was studying towards a PhD. When I was offered the chance to come here, I decided to leave the PhD to take up the opportunity. I was informed of the scholarship from emails I received from two different academics that had previously taught me, and thought that it sounded like a unique opportunity I just had to act on. So I applied and was thankfully accepted to the programme.

In 2012, I participated the foreign training project that "the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre Archaeological Field School". It is a three week intensive programme focused on culture, heritage and archaeology in Cambodia and Singapore. We participated in lectures, field training (survey, excavations, and local respondent interviews), analysis, and site visits. Then we submitted a final report and group presentation.

I heard about the Alphawood Scholarships program through emails from two of my Professors - Professor Lilian Handlin, an independent scholar based at Harvard University and Professor John N. Miksic, Head of Archaeology Unit, National University of Singapore.

I am studying the 'Buddha Footprints' in Myanmar. In our country we used to worship these, as they did in Thailand and Cambodia. My university at home could not support my research enough to look at more than just one area in Myanmar. Now I have the Alphawood Scholarship, I have much greater opportunities to research the Buddha Footprints, not just in Myanmar but across

Southeast Asia.

This year I was on the ELAS course, and then the pre-session course, improving my English skills in advance of starting the MA. Before these courses I had some ability in English, but not enough to write academically. It was really useful and I feel very confident to start the MA now.

## How have you found your experience in the UK and at SOAS?

Coming to the UK was made to be very convenient for us as the scholarships programme arranged everything for us. When my plane arrived, a taxi was already waiting to take me directly to my accommodation, where they had already arranged my room. Our halls are quite close to SOAS so it is very easy to come to school, and all the Alphawood students live there so I never felt on my own. Some of my friends here at SOAS who are not Alphawood Scholars, they had big problems as international students with accommodation, with money, with adjusting. It makes me feel very lucky and very grateful to be on this scholarship. Coming to London was like a dream for me, and my family are very proud of me to be studying in the UK.

## Could you tell us about your area of study, and how your studies are progressing?

I will be on the MA Art and Archaeology programme, and have already selected some of the courses I want to start with - Indian Temples, and Buddha Images. For my dissertation I want to look at the different ways the Buddha Footprints are approached in different Southeast Asian nations. I know that in Myanmar they are very famous and some still worship them, but I have

“I want to thank the Foundation for making everything so easy for us to come here, to look after our accommodation and to help improve our English language skills as well as funding our studies. It’s a really amazing thing they have done for us, and I am so very grateful to them for it.”

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not looked closely yet into the relationship with these objects across the region today. My plan is to carry out a comparative study of Buddha Footprints in Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia, looking at how they are made and how they are treated and approached by people in each country.

**Where does your interest in this subject come from; why is it important to you?**

I have studied archaeology since 2003, and have completed a BA, MA and got some way through a PhD before leaving to join this scholarships programme. My main interest is in our history, particularly Buddhist art and architecture, and I am less interested in prehistory. I have always enjoyed archaeology more than other subjects; I find it a very interesting thing to study. What appeals to me about it as a profession is that I would be able to travel to different Asian cities and excavate sites. If I was studying chemistry or physics, I would be looking at theory, with archaeology the focus is on real objects and buildings from our own history.

Unfortunately in my home country there have been very few opportunities through my education to actually experience working on an archaeological dig site. Immediately before joining SOAS, I took a one year postgraduate course in Myanmar that offered experience of excavation. I enjoyed that a lot and it gave me some experience of excavation.

**What are your plans for your future?**

This is a big question for me! I have to admit to being a bit worried. When I chose to come here

my professors told me that I could not come to SOAS without finishing my PhD first, but this was my one chance. So I chose to leave the PhD. In my country archaeology is not a very popular subject, and there are few opportunities to get a job even with a PhD.

So of course I do want to continue from this MA onto a PhD, but not back home in Myanmar. I am planning to apply to do a PhD here at SOAS - that is my ambition. If I have to go home again after the MA I am really not sure what I will do! For now I will put my focus on doing well on my MA programme and not worrying too much.

If I am able to take a PhD at SOAS, then when I have finished I will go home to Myanmar. As a senior student, I will share my knowledge with my juniors. My long term goal of course is to be a practicing archaeologist, ideally working with a world heritage organisation like UNESCO.

**What impact has the scholarship had on your studies, and your life?**

I don’t know how to sum up my words of thanks to the Alphawood Foundation. This has been such a dream opportunity for me. I never thought I would get such an opportunity. I want to thank the Foundation for making everything so easy for us to come here, to look after our accommodation and to help improve our English language skills as well as funding our studies. It’s a really amazing thing they have done for us, and I am so very grateful to them for it.



# Wieske Sapardan

## MA History of Art and Archaeology Indonesia

### Could you start by telling us a little about your academic and professional background?

Before I came to SOAS I worked at UNESCO Jakarta dealing with cultural heritage preservation of world heritage sites, museums and collections. I found out about the scholarship through a colleague at UNESCO who shared the information with colleagues across the region.

My work at UNESCO is concerned with the preservation of cultural sites. While I have a lot of knowledge of policy and practice of conservation, I don't have an in-depth knowledge of different sorts of sites and the history of Buddhism and Hinduism through the region. I feel that gaining this knowledge will improve my ability to do my work and how we approach different sites.

### How have you found your experience in the UK and at SOAS?

When I first came to SOAS my first impression was how international it is. You meet people from all over the world here, and there is a range of nationalities in every class. This means that as well as learning from our lecturers, we are learning from each other as well - learning to see issues from the different perspectives that come from different cultural backgrounds.

### Could you tell us about your area of study, and how your studies are progressing?

On my MA programme this year I took two courses on Museum Studies, looking at how to curate art. I find this really interesting as I have to work a lot with museums through my work but have never had any formal education in the area, so it has provided me with some important context. Throughout the course I did some reading and research on the Indonesian collection at the British Museum, and also took classes on the anthropology of Southeast Asia and the history of

the maritime period in the region. I have found all of the courses really interesting, and they complement each other well. My work at UNESCO Jakarta covers five countries - Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and East Timor. By learning about these countries anthropologically I will gain a greater understanding of the sites there that we work to preserve.

### What are your plans for your future?

After I finish my MA I will return to UNESCO Jakarta and continue my work on cultural heritage preservation. The network I have formed here will be really useful as I now have contacts in most of the countries I work on, and people to contact when we organise workshops who can promote them or participate in them.

### What impact has the scholarship had on your studies, and your life?

I am very grateful for this scholarship; it's offered me a big opportunity to study here in London, and to meet people at SOAS from all over the world. I have had the opportunity to meet and be taught by experts in the field, not just on Indonesia, but on all of the Southeast Asian nations that I work on, as well as those I don't.

Meeting and getting to know the other Alphawood Scholars has been one of the best things about the year for me. Throughout this year we have really got to know each other, and got to understand each other's cultures as well.

What the Alphawood foundation have given us a really big opportunity. For me, I would never have imagined that I would be able to study abroad, this really has been a dream come true for me. I had a wonderful year studying here, and I think what we have learned here and the contacts we have made will be really beneficial to the field and the region.

# The Alphawood Scholarships 2014-15

Introducing the new arrivals...

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## **Sokha Seang, Thailand, MA**

My teaching experiences have inspired me to seek higher education so that I may fulfil my dream of becoming a professor in the field of Southeast Asian Epigraphy. It is my goal to write books to enable better education around these ancient languages. I am particularly interested in developing a workbook for beginners, as I have experienced myself how difficult it can be to attain competence in an epigraphic tradition. The MA programme at SOAS will provide me with invaluable experience, skills, knowledge, and challenges. It will also help me to prepare me for the next phase of my academic goals, both in my university teaching career and in my planned pursuit of a PhD, which I personally consider the ultimate educational achievement.

## **Udomluck (Aom) Hoontrakul, Thailand, MA**

I am currently a lecturer at Faculty of Sociology and Anthropology, Thammasat University, Thailand. My departmental responsibility is to teach courses related to archaeological issues such as cultural heritage studies, museology and anthropology of death. I also participate on the Thammasat University Museum committee, which supports both academic research and exhibits for the education of students and the general public. The Museum intends to develop connections with local museums as academic allies. In the near future, we will organise a workshop on cultural heritage management and conservation. I plan to complete a MA and PhD and return to Thailand and to my teaching post at the Faculty of Sociology and Anthropology. My academic position will be made permanent when I complete my MA and PhD, and I look forward to investing the time and resources into this advanced level of research. I would be most honoured to do this doctoral work through the Department of Art History and Archaeology at SOAS, and look

forward to contributing to developing our knowledge of mainland Southeast Asia's Early Modern period.

## **Saw Tun Lynn, Myanmar, MA**

I currently work as a tutor in Dagon University, Myanmar, in the Archaeology Department. After studying archaeology for six years to MA level, I have determined that I want to use this knowledge to further cross cultural understanding. I live in a country with a rich culture, but I am concerned that my heritage is being neglected and I feel that I can play a part in preventing these landmarks from falling into ruin. In Myanmar there is a shortage of academic scholars in archaeology, and a lack of new technology and human resources. We have fallen far behind international academia and have to work hard to catch up with other countries. As a teacher these facts have motivated me to apply for this scholarship at a UK university to serve my country. I will do my best to learn all I can while at SOAS, and help close the gaps in archaeological scholarship in Myanmar.

## **Erin Marie Gleeson, Cambodia (US citizen), MA**

Living in Phnom Penh since 2002, I have been a participant-observer in numerous aspects of continuity in visual arts and culture, encompassing the curatorial, educational, academic, institutional, ministerial, and commercial. Most importantly, I have had the privilege to work closely with artists across three generations through the evolution of ideas, processes, and frameworks. The depth of reflection - both in research and in writing - that I feel I owe to these artists, histories, and experiences is immense. During my time at SOAS, I intend to develop my knowledge in foundational theory and methodologies of research and writing in an environment that is relevant to and resourceful when considering the context of Cambodia, and also aim to gain intermediate



“The opportunity to pursue MA studies at SOAS will greatly benefit me both as a student and a future art researcher/ educator back in Vietnam. I believe that these two aspects – research and education - are among the most important things we need to focus on to have a greater effect on the development of our national art and culture.”

- Tuong Linh Do

literacy in Khmer. After SOAS, I aim to be better equipped to conduct research, teach, and publish more scholarly curatorial texts. I wish to consider art and curatorial practice in Cambodia in light of both local frameworks and international discourses.

### **Tuong Linh Do, Vietnam, MA**

Since I was a child I have always had a great affection for the arts, and have taken every opportunity to get involved with as many artistic activities as possible. Having realised my true passion for visual arts upon graduating from high school, I chose to study History of Art for my BA. Over the last eight years, I have learnt so much from first-hand experiences with arts both on a professional and on a personal level. Therefore, upon finding the MA programme of Contemporary Art of Asia and Africa at SOAS, I immediately felt this is an ideal course for me. In 2007, I joined Art Vietnam Gallery, one of the most established art galleries in Hanoi, as an Assistant Art Director working with up to 50 artists from all over the country. This work experience allowed me to gain valuable knowledge of the local and international art markets, art management, and art history through working and interacting with artists, well-known researchers and curators such as Truong Tan and Nguyen Minh Thanh. My most recent job was working on Hanoi Doclub, an independent film project sponsored by the Goethe Institute Hanoi, where I co-organised workshops, screenings, panel discussions, and exhibitions - introducing new world cinema and art films to the wider public. The opportunity to pursue MA studies at SOAS will greatly benefit me both as a student and a future art researcher and educator back in Vietnam. I believe that these two aspects – research and education - are among the most important things we need to focus on to have a greater effect on

the development of our national art and culture. For my part, I intend to enrich the department’s works by adding my own perspectives, knowledge of regional practices as well as my cultural identity.

### **Win Myat Aung, Myanmar, Diploma**

I hold a BA, MA and PhD in International Relations and work as a Senior Research Officer with Myanmar’s Ministry of Education, where I am responsible for organising and conducting research programmes, conferences, seminars, workshop and lectures relating to history, cultures and traditions. At present Myanmar is opening up more to the outside world, and some policies and procedures are becoming more relaxed compared to the old days. This allows us at the Ministry of Education to carry out more collaborative research projects with international institutions. When looking into such institutions, I discovered SOAS, where there are many expert researchers looking at Southeast Asian history, culture and traditions. Although my work is largely focussed on culture, my education background is in international relations, so I believe that this course will be of great value to my work. I believe that this opportunity to study at SOAS will enhance my capacity to carry out my work, and also help me to identify future programmes and projects we might focus on in the future. This will be good for the academic development of Myanmar relating to history art and culture.

### **Thet Mon Htoo, Myanmar, MA (ELAS)**

I have recently completed an MA in Architecture at Mandalay Technological University, which included modules on English, History and Theory of Western and Eastern Architecture, Building Services, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Architecture, Innovative Architecture and Urbanism. Conservation, preservation and the appreciation of our heritage





“Ultimately I would like to be able to initiate and run projects to promote art amongst local communities. I believe that the MA I will take at SOAS will enhance my capacity to pursue these goals, and help me integrate art into public life and have a positive social impact in the region.”

- Thao Nguyen

is an important duty for us. There are many important historical sites in our country which must be protected. I am particularly personally attached to the Bagan Stupa and Temple, which is one of the most famous historical sites in Myanmar. As Myanmar develops, we must plan carefully to balance the need for new buildings that are fit for modern purpose along with the responsibility to protect our heritage. I am grateful to the Alphawood Scholarships programme for presenting me this opportunity, which will help me to contribute towards this goal.

#### **Thao Nguyen, Vietnam, MA**

Born and raised in northern Vietnam, I have always believed in the transformative power of art. I have watched first-hand as our visual and performing arts community has fed off the country’s rapid social and economic development. I started my career in the arts at Art Vietnam Gallery in Hanoi, one of the nation’s best established galleries, where I was lucky enough to meet and be inspired by some of the country’s best modern and traditional artists. After working there for four years, I undertook postgraduate study in Arts Management in the Netherlands, after which I returned to Vietnam to work in performing arts. After more than two years of focussing on performing arts, I have decided I would like to return my focus to visual arts. Ultimately I would like to be able to initiate and run projects to promote art amongst local communities. I believe that the MA I will study towards at SOAS will enhance my capacity to pursue these goals, and help me integrate art into public life and have a positive social impact in the region.

#### **Yamin Htay, Myanmar, MA (ELAS)**

My name is Yamin Htay and I live in Mandalay, Myanmar, where I have been studying towards an

MA in Architecture at Mandalay Technological University. I have studied Eastern and Western History, Architectural Structure, Building Services, Construction Management. I also gave presentations on Modern Architecture, Cognitive Design Process, Practice of Urban Design and Innovative Architecture. During my studies I took part in a group project of Urban Data Collection for Mandalay Central Business District with my classmates, and we also took part in data collection for the Urban Research Development of Sagaing, which is a 700 year old city. There are many historical Heritage sites that are forgotten in Myanmar and I want to help raise public awareness of them. At SOAS I want to carry out research on ancient Palaces such as Mya Nan San Kyaw Palace in Mandalay, Ava, Bagan Palaces.

#### **Sothea (Kunthea) Ku, Cambodia, Diploma (ELAS)**

I am an artist and teacher. I teach drawing and painting at Phare Ponleu Selpak Association School (PPS) in Battambang, Cambodia. PPS is an NGO association providing many types of art training to the vulnerable in our local community. We try to give them a future through art, and are the only school of this kind in Cambodia. We are currently changing the curriculum at the school and started teaching art history three months ago. This has not been working as well as we would like as there is no native Khmer speaking teacher for the subject and few of our students have a good enough understanding of English or French to participate. I would like to gain some knowledge so that I, as a Khmer speaker, can also teach this subject and allow more of our students to benefit from it. In addition to teaching my students, I aim to create an association (Battambang Artists’ Association) for past students and artists. I want to do something to help them to share their artistic talent with the world and document it for future generations. Ultimately, I



“To prevent any further destruction of our heritage, Cambodian art professionals need to be trained... I believe that my study at SOAS will provide me with the background and perspective required to effectively work on such projects.”

- Davin Chhay

hope my participation on this course at SOAS will benefit my work with the community of Battambang, and help our city to become a centre for the arts in Cambodia.

### **Davin Chhay, Cambodia, Certificate**

The arts were primary in ancient Cambodia, but they have been devastated by colonial antiquity trafficking in the 1930s-1960s and by the Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s. Many sculptures were trafficked to France during the French colonial period, and the looting and illicit trafficking during and after the Khmer Rouge regime was significant. To prevent any further destruction of our heritage, Cambodian art professionals need to be trained. The Postgraduate Asian Arts programme seems to be the perfect programme for my current career at the Documentation Centre of Cambodia, where I am working on a project called the Museum of Memory. The project aims to help heal and reconcile the people of Cambodia following the civil war. I am working to create a contemporary dance based on Cambodian art history in combination with European art and surviving traditional dance. I believe that my study at SOAS will provide me with the background and perspective required to effectively work on such projects.

### **Sanda Linn, Myanmar, Diploma (ELAS)**

Following a BA in Myanmar Studies, a Postgraduate Diploma in Archaeology, and an MA in Archaeology, I was appointed to a teaching post at the University of Yangon where I also obtained a PhD in Archaeology. I was promoted to an assistant lecturer on 25th February 2013 and still serve in the same capacity. As well as teaching, I am conducting research on the art and architecture of religious buildings. While my knowledge of Myanmar religious architecture is strong, I have had few opportunities to carry out

any comparative study of such buildings in other Southeast Asian nations, and I hope to be able to gain such knowledge through the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art at SOAS. At the same time, I firmly believe that I will be able to write research papers which can help foreign scholars know more about ancient Myanmar's cultural heritage and that I will be able to participate in programmes that protect and preserve ancient Myanmar's cultural heritage in a more systematic manner. I also believe that, with the academic knowledge to be acquired from SOAS, I will be able to contribute to a certain extent to the promotion of the education standard of my country. We have had little chance to study other countries so I hope the Alphawood Scholarship programme might offer a rare chance to improve my knowledge and ability to contribute to improving higher education in Myanmar.

### **Pipad Krajaejun, Thailand, MA (ELAS)**

On the MA programme in Southeast Asian Art and Archaeology at SOAS, I hope to examine the archaeology of ethnicity in 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century northern Thailand and Myanmar. My previous archaeological and historical experience has prepared me well to pursue this MA through the Alphawood programme at SOAS. I began my archaeological fieldwork training at Silpakorn University, worked in 1998 with Dr. Peter Grave (University of New England), and became a research assistant for Professor Rasmi Shoocongdej through her Highland Archaeology Project in Mae Hong Son Province in 2001. Since then, I have worked on 16 archaeological projects (including one in the US and one in Cambodia), and have directed or co-directed 13 of these projects. The Department of History of Art and Archaeology at SOAS is well-suited for my MA research, with its wide range of expert scholars such as Professor Elizabeth Moore and Professor



“Singapore did not encourage art disciplines when I was a child, but this is now changing and it is a change I would like to be involved in... My long-term goal is to bring art history as a course to high schools, where children at a younger age can gain the exposure that may more effectively nurture their interest towards the promotion of art and culture.”

- Grace (Siwan) Lai

Ashley Thompson, and its excellent resources and library. The aims of completing this MA and PhD are, first, to return to my teaching and develop the subject of History and Archaeology of Ethnicity, which has never been offered before at Thai universities. Second, I would like to undertake research concerning the history and archaeology of ethnicity in Thailand and Southeast Asia and expand collaboration with foreign researchers. Finally, I would like to disseminate the knowledge among the ethnic groups in and outside of Thailand in order for them to get more social space.

#### **Grace (Siwan) Lai, Singapore, MA**

At 17, I was drawn into the world of Art History when my family emigrated from Singapore to New Zealand. The schools I attended in Auckland offered me courses that were not available to me back home, including Art History, and I have not looked back since. Five years later I had completed my Masters in Art History at the University of Auckland, and have since returned to Singapore and am working as an Exhibition Coordinator and Curator at the Cape of Good Hope Art Gallery. Singapore did not encourage art disciplines when I was a child, but this is now changing and it is a change I would like to be involved in. Once I have attained my MA at SOAS, I intend to teach Southeast Asian Art History, with a focus on Singapore. My long-term goal is to bring art history as a course to high schools, where children at a younger age can gain the exposure that may more effectively nurture their interest towards the promotion of art and culture.

#### **Menghong Chhum, Cambodia, MA (ELAS)**

History of Art is one of my professional and personal interests. Since my first exposure to Buddhist and Hindu art in undergraduate studies, I

have challenged myself to understand how the culture of religion flows from its place of origin to another, and what events and mechanisms transmute the religious concepts into a new culture in an adapted home. My research proposal *Evolution of the symbolism of Buddhist and Hindu religious art on ancient Khmer architectural structures* will attempt to understand Buddhist and Hindu religious and secular art by approaching the subject matter through motif art. It is my hope that my research will improve the body of knowledge on this area and that it can be shared with the next generation of our region. This study will also be a big contribution to elucidating the history of the introduction of Buddhist concepts into the ancient Khmer culture, and will assist as a contributing factor in the conservation of Buddhist art in Cambodia. The level of degradation of this art is at a critical stage, and actions to document it are required immediately. As a young researcher in Cambodia it will be my honour and privilege to represent SOAS as a significant contributor to the corpus of knowledge of Khmer Buddhist and Hindu art.

#### **Rachna Chhay, Vietnam, MA (ELAS)**

I wish to study at postgraduate level to increase my professional expertise in research, conservation, and management Angkor cultural heritage. I am an active, field-based researcher and have presented papers and lectures on my original research in Cambodia, Australia, Japan, the Netherlands, the US, and Ireland. These experiences have deepened my archaeological knowledge and capacities. However, completing an MA is now necessary to become a fully-fledged scholar in my field. Several questions structure my proposed MA thesis, tentatively entitled *The Organization of Khmer Stoneware Production, from Kilns to Finished Products*, for example: Can we use the Chain Opérateur to identify



"I am seeking the opportunity to ask deeper questions and enhance my hands-on experience with some rigorous research and academic skills. I believe that this postgraduate programme will inspire me with both academic and creative ideas, so that I will be better equipped to support and nurture my Cambodian colleagues as they build on existing levels of a developing arts and culture sector."

- Suon Bun Rith

differences of stoneware production technology in Angkorian Kilns? If many of these kilns operated during the same time, did they specialize in different vessel forms and functions, and if so in what ways? What are differences and similarities in ceramic forms/shapes exist in the stoneware production of the Central Angkor production centres? Could the ceramic classification from each production centre be used to reproduce the consumption patterns among temple and habitation sites? Having the time and training at MA level will enable me to develop a more grounded research framework, and will help me to design, seek funding for, and run such training programs on my own. I look forward to the academic opportunities that SOAS provides, which will make me better-equipped to operate in the international world of Southeast Asian art and archaeology.

#### **Pawina Phetluan, Thailand, MA (ELAS)**

Studying Archaeology has been my dream since I was 10 years old and stemmed from reading about the topic of Ayutthaya history (a Siamese kingdom from 1351-1767). I have always been fascinated by how archaic cultures have influenced our modern lives. Having attained a BA in Archaeology and Art History, I am looking forward to broadening my world experience my academic and professional careers with an MA at SOAS, which I hope will help pave the way to PhD studies. My plan is to share my knowledge by teaching at university level in Thailand, and that I can learn how to make a positive impact on the preservation of archaeological sites in my country. In my view, SOAS is one of the world's leading institution for the study of Southeast Asia Art History and Archaeology, boasting many famous specialists in this area. I am grateful to the Alphawood Foundation for this exciting opportunity.

#### **Suon Bun Rith, Cambodia, MA**

Though not formally trained in the arts, most of my professional life has been spent acquiring skills in performing arts management. Devotion and passion have driven me and allowed me to make significant contributions towards building capacity among Cambodia's performing arts community. I am seeking the opportunity to ask deeper questions and enhance my hands-on experience with some rigorous research and academic skills. I believe that this postgraduate programme will inspire me with both academic and creative ideas, so that I will be better equipped to support and nurture my Cambodian colleagues as they build on existing levels of a developing arts and culture sector.

#### **Chankraksmei (Raksmei) Muong, Cambodia, Diploma (ELAS)**

Completing a Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art through the Alphawood Scholarships programme will offer me valuable resources and guidance to develop my MA research topic around my interest in the art historical relationship between Angkorian Hindu and Buddhist temples and those elsewhere across the Southeast Asia region. I am particularly interested in Dvaravati and Cham traditions as mainland comparisons, and with Bujand Valley religious structures and Borobudur/Prambanan temples as island comparisons. The Diploma will help me become a more competent scholar and Southeast Asian archaeologist. I would like to bring my experiences and knowledge back to my home country so that I can teach the next generation of Cambodian students. We still have a lot of sites to be studied in Cambodia.



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### Ekob Bastiawan, Indonesia, Diploma (ELAS)

I was born in Indonesia, the largest country in Southeast Asia, both in terms of population and surface area, perhaps also in terms of archaeological heritage. I grew up in the small cities of Blitar and Kediri, both in the southern part of East Java, and have always lived surrounded by archaeological sites. So far, my involvement in conservation and preservation activities has been that of a layman. I have been studying the subject independently for the past five years. Besides reading any publications that I can lay my hands on, I have attended some seminars and lectures on archaeology held by the Cultural Heritage Conservation Bureau in my province. East Java is rich in archaeological remains, but many of them are in a bad condition, neglected and forgotten. The Bureau has limited resources to manage a wide remit. In view of limited government means and interest in preservation of heritage, I believe that the involvement of groups of enthusiastic volunteers from local communities is crucial. In 2010, some friends and I founded several community groups to aid in documenting and preserving local heritage. Collaborating with other local communities, schools and local government offices, we have undertaken a number of activities to raise awareness of the importance of preserving our archaeological heritage. However, in my exchanges with Indonesian and foreign scholars, I have come to realise the limitations of my knowledge. With the academic competence I will gain at SOAS, I am sure I could have a much greater impact within our local communities and play a more effective role.



*Above: Returning Alphawood scholars and new arrivals network at SOAS' Annual Scholars Reception.*



# Professor Ashley Thompson

Hiram W. Woodward Chair in Southeast Asian Art

2014-15 was an exciting first year for me at SOAS. As Academic Lead of SAAAP I have prioritised the long-term planning necessary to ensure SAAAP stays a steady course to fulfil its mission. Keeping our collective eye on the broader project mission for Southeast Asian art and archaeology while establishing strong and viable structures at SOAS to realize that mission has required painstaking determination on all of our parts, but I am convinced of its importance, and am delighted to see the steady progress made over the year.

Working with the MA bursary student cohort was no doubt the highlight - the start of what is developing into an increasingly inspiring pedagogical context as we move into our second bursary year. The students are bright, hardworking and responsible - as committed to their studies as to the professional lives they have put on hold to seize the opportunity offered by the Alphawood programme. The 2014-15 cohort launched a remarkable collective dynamic. The students bonded quickly, offering support to each other throughout the year, while also melding into the larger departmental postgraduate community. Their infectious enthusiasm gave the department, and especially those of us who had the privilege of working closely with them, a certain Southeast Asian bounce, and enabled them to benefit from the dynamism and diversity of the postgraduate cohort at large.

The MA study-trip to Paris was a highlight of this year - what a pleasure it was to work for two intensive days with a keen group of scholars and professionals from SOAS and beyond, all committed to research and teaching on Southeast Asian art. My work at SOAS builds on more than two decades of teaching, each and every year of which has been fulfilling; the Alphawood programme has allowed me to develop my pedagogy in new ways, drawing from past experience but also learning anew from the

backgrounds and aspirations of the wide range of Southeast Asian students now at SOAS. A teacher could not ask for more.

In terms of research, the SAAAP programme also enabled me in my first year at SOAS to pursue a long-term dream of developing a collaborative research project on the post-Angkorian emergence of Theravada Buddhism in Cambodia. This is a project I first formulated at UC Berkeley, when the Chair of the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies there supported academic staff in pursuing what we collectively saw to be the most important unanswered question in our respective fields. I left Berkeley before the project could take off, and have never since been in an institutional environment sufficiently focused on Southeast Asia to nurture such work. The time is ripe, both because of SAAAP and because a range of new research on the topic is currently underway. I hosted a first SAAAP conference on the topic in July 2015, and am now working with Professor Hiram W. Woodward to craft a proposition for a co-edited follow-up publication. This is a great privilege. I believe the project will lead to groundbreaking understandings of the art, archaeology and cultural history of Southeast Asia.

Lastly, I am delighted to be leading the Scoping Project for a Field School and Conservation Project at Banteay Chhmar Temple. This is potentially a transformative project for heritage management in the region as well as for our pedagogical programme at SOAS. I think we all feel immense excitement and responsibility in conceiving this work, and are immensely grateful to Alphawood for having placed their confidence in our ability to see it through.

# “This is a great privilege. I believe the project will lead to ground-breaking understandings of the art, archaeology and cultural history of Southeast Asia.”

## Teaching

- Introduction to the Art and Archaeology of Southeast Asia (UG, with Christian Luczanits and Elizabeth Moore)
- Exploring Theravadin Arts: Aesthetics and Politics of the Non-Self (UG)
- The Buddha Image: Theory, Practice and the Making of Buddhist Art History (MA)
- Memory and the Memorial: Southeast Asia and its Others (MA)

## PhD Supervision (as Main Supervisor)

- Joanna Wolfarth, ‘Faces of Cambodia: Buddhism(s), Portraiture and Images of Kings,’ AHRC co-supervised at the University of Leeds, completed 2015.
- Leah Houghton, ‘Contact and Territory: Francis Upritchard and “New Zealand Art”,’ AHRC co-supervised at the University of Leeds
- Vichaya Mukdamanee, ‘Buddhist Aesthetics, Thai Beliefs: Art Practice as Practice of the Self,’ co-supervised at the Ruskin School of Art, Oxford
- Gumring Hkangda, ‘Thick provenance: interactions between European and local collecting practices refracted through the lens of the mainland Southeast Asia material at the British Museum,’ (AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award, co-supervised with Alexandra Green, Curator of Southeast Asian Art, British Museum)
- Deidre Parker, ‘A Deconstruction of Buddhist Display in the Western Museum’
- Ben Wreyford, ‘Seeing the “foreigner” in early Southeast Asian art c.100 BCE - c.800 CE’

## Publications

- Engendering Cambodia: Territory, Sovereignty and Sexual Difference in the Inventions of Angkor, Routledge (Critical Studies in Buddhism), in press, to appear 2016.

## Book Chapters

- ‘Vann Nath,’ in J. McDaniel, M. Rowe and J. Samuels, eds., *Figures of Buddhist Modernity in Asia*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, in press, to appear 2015.
- “Hiding the female sex: a sustained cultural dialogue

between India and Southeast Asia,” in A. Dallapiccola and A. Vergese, eds., *Cultural Dialogues between India and Southeast Asia from the 7th and the 16th century*, KR Cama Institute, in press, to appear 2016.

- ‘Contemporary Cambodian Buddhist Traditions: Seen from the Past,’ in M. Jerryson, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Buddhism*, New York: Oxford University Press, in press, to appear 2016.
- ‘Portrait of the Artist as a Buddhist Man,’ in Steven Collins and Juliane Schober, eds., *Theravada Encounters with Modernity*, Routledge, in press, to appear 2016.
- ‘Emergencies: Contemporary Art in Cambodia,’ in P. Flores and L. Huang, eds., *Southeast Asian Art from the Nineteenth Century to Now*, National Gallery of Singapore, in press, to appear 2016.

## Editorial and Translation Work

- Co-founder and editor, *Udaya Journal of Khmer Studies* (annual Khmer-French-English publication: [yosothor.org/udaya](http://yosothor.org/udaya)).
- Co-author of Introduction to Special Issue of *Udaya on Modern and Contemporary Cambodian Art*, vol. 12, 2015.
- Editor and Co-translator of the English-language edition of Vann Molyvann’s French doctoral dissertation on ancient Southeast Asian Territorial Management, to appear 2016 with Monument Books, Phnom Penh.

## External Research and Outreach Activities

- Consultant to the Asia Art Archive for the development of online archives of Southeast Asian art materials
- Directeur de Programme, Collège International de Philosophie, Paris (six-year research programme on Buddhist Aesthetics, in its final year)

## External Professional Service

- External Committee Member, Goldsmiths Revalidation of Histories of Art MA, LaSalle College, Singapore
- Peer Reviewer, *ArtMargins*, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, *Cultural Critique*, *diacritics*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*



## Dr Christian Luczanits

### David L. Snellgrove Chair of Tibetan and Buddhist Art

Much of my first year at SOAS was dominated by familiarising myself with the institution, establishing a strong teaching program, and getting to know the Southeast Asian Art Academic Programme.

In terms of teaching, the newly designed MA courses "Critical Themes in Tibetan Buddhist Art" and "Tibetan Buddhist Monuments in Context" worked very well and will be retained in future. The BA courses on the "Arts of Tibetan" and "Himalayan Architecture" will be changed for 2016/17 to integrate architecture within the development of Tibetan art. Since BA courses alternate I created two new courses focused on Indian Buddhist art, of which the new BA/MA "Imagining Buddhahood in South Asia" which I convene with Dr. Vincent Tournier, Seiyu Kiriya Lecturer in Buddhist Studies, was created also with SAAAP in mind, as it provides a foundation in reading and interpreting early Buddhist art that is valid for Southeast Asia as well. The second newly created BA course focuses on "Gandharan Art and its Heritage", but probably will only be successful in terms of student numbers if it is also offered on an MA level in future.

Teaching predominantly Tibetan art I had only one Alphawood Scholar attending any of my courses in the first year, but second read some of their essay work, and met and engaged with them at several occasions throughout the year. I was pleased to see the bond that developed between the Alphawood Scholars and the dedication with which they pursued their studies. Some of them appeared to excel in the new environment and took full advantage of the new ways of thinking SOAS offered them in their studies, others appeared to be more engrained into traditional frameworks of thinking known from their earlier professional life. These

differences were less apparent in conversations with them than in their writing. But even in the latter cases, there is no doubt that their time at SOAS will make a major difference in their future professional life.

I have also attended both one-day conferences that were organised under the umbrella of the Southeast Asian Art Academic Programme. The autumn Symposium on Banteay Chhmar offered a more general perspective on the monument, its present state of conservation and interpretation. The conference on The Emergence of Theravada Buddhism in Cambodia: Southeast Asian Perspectives was more focused and provided a range of perspectives on the same question that complemented each other. With the participation of scholars from the region and the involvement of Alphawood Scholars in its organisation, this conference provided a good model for future ones.

I have also been intensively involved with the conception of the possible SAAAP extension through a field school at Banteay Chhmar. I had coincidentally visited the site the summer before I joined SOAS, and thus was familiar with both its environment and its special interest in terms of esoteric Buddhist Art in Cambodia.



“I was pleased to see the bond that developed between the Alphawood Scholars and the dedication with which they pursued their studies... there is no doubt that their time at SOAS will make a major difference in their future professional life.”

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### Teaching

- Arts of Tibet
- Critical Themes in Tibetan Buddhist Art
- Gandharan Art and its Heritage
- Imag(in)ing Buddhahood in South Asia (1)
- Imag(in)ing Buddhas in South Asia (1)
- Tibetan Buddhist Monuments in Context

### Lectures

- “Kashmir Sculpture in the Mirror of Alchi”, in a panel on Collecting Kashmir: The Arts of Kashmir and Their Legacy in the Western Himalayas organised by Rob Linrothe at the Annual Conference 2015 of the Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, 26th to 29th March 2015.
- “Ardent Donors, Ordained Rulers, and Astute Protectors: Remembering Buddhist Kings in Western Himalayan Art”, at a workshop on the Memories of Kings: Kingship in the Religious Imaginings of Asia hosted by The Kingship and Religion in Tibet Project at the Institute for Indology and Tibetology, Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, 22nd to 23rd May 2015.
- “Observations on the Hemis Museum Collection” at the 17th International Association for Ladakh Studies Conference at Kargil, J&K, India, 26th to 29th July 2015.

### Publications:

- Luczanits, Christian, and Dorji Namgyel. 2015. What Is Bhutanese about Paintings from Bhutan? *Marg* 66, no. 4: 82-99.
- With Dorji Namgyel. “What Is Bhutanese about Paintings from Bhutan?” *Marg* 66, no. 4 (2015): 82-99.
- Review: Henss, Michael. *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet: The Central Regions*. 2 vols. Munich, London, New York: Prestel, 2014. In *Orientalia* 46, no. 6 (2015): 120-122.
- “From Kashmir to Western Tibet: The Many Faces of a Regional Style.” In *Collecting Paradise. Buddhist Art of Kashmir and Its Legacies*, edited by Rob Linrothe. New York & Evanston: Rubin

Museum of Art and Mary & Leigh Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University, 2014: 108-149.

- “The diffusion of Gandharan and Indian models in South Asia.” In *Art et civilisation de l’orient hellénisé: Rencontres et échanges culturels d’Alexandre aux Sassanides*, edited by Pierre Leriche. Paris: Editions A&J Picard, 2014: 245–250.

### Publications finished in this period and in press:

- “Inspired by the Past: the Art of Chöying Dorjé and Western Himalayan Sculpture.” In *Tibet’s Turbulent 17th Century and The Tenth Karmapa*. Proceedings of a workshop at the Rubin Museum of Art, New York, edited by Karl Debreczeny, & Gray Tuttle. in press.
- With Jaroslav Poncar. *Klöße im Himalaya*. Edition Panorama, in press.
- “Mirror of the Buddha—An Early Tibetan Portrait.” In *Festschrift*, in press: 8.
- “Puja and Piety in Buddhism.” In *Puja and Piety: Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist Art from the Indian Subcontinent*, edited by Pratapaditya Pal. Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, published by UC Press, in press.
- “The Nako Monuments in Context.” In *Nako*, edited by Tatjana Bayerová, & Gabriela Krist. in press.



## Dr Louise Thythacott

Pratapaditya Pal Senior Lecturer in  
Curating and Museology of Asian Art

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It has been a fruitful first year for the SAAAP project at SOAS. A range of Alphawood scholars took my MA courses in 2014-15 - 'Museums, Anthropology and the Arts of Asia and Africa' (Term 1), and 'Collecting and Curating Buddhist Art in the Museum' (Term 2). The Alphawood Scholars demonstrated a high level of commitment throughout and proved to be highly motivated students, keen to learn. Almost without exception, their course assessments were amongst the highest in any of my classes. Several Alphawood students have also been accepted by SOAS as PhD Scholars next year, and I look forward to welcoming them and supervising their work.

In November 2014, we hosted the visit of Dr Pratapaditya Pal and organised two events for him: a seminar I chaired on 'The Pleasures and Perils of Curating' (4th November 2014), and an open lecture, 'From Benares to Boston: Ananda Coomaraswamy as Collector and Curator' (5th November 2014), which was attended by almost 230 people.

I have worked on a new MA course at SOAS this year, 'Curating Cultures', which focuses on the Southeast Asian handling collections in the Department of the History of Art and Archaeology. Many of the objects were donated by Professor Elizabeth Moore (now retired). This new, innovative course culminates in student-led, team-based exhibitions, and has attracted a record number of students (over 50). Alphawood MA students have enrolled on this - and Heidi Tan, the first Alphawood PhD student (2014), is helping with some of the sessions, making valuable contributions with her many years of curatorial experience.

During 2014-15, I undertook a range of museum curatorial advisory work. I was the Consultant Curator for the re-display of the China Gallery at the Lady Lever Art Gallery, part of the National Museums Liverpool, which is planned to open in 2016. From November-December 2014, and between March and April 2015, I identified objects, drafted exhibition text, and assessed design layouts. I also continued as the consultant curator for the proposed Asian Heritage Museum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In my role as a Trustee of the Quaker Tapestry Collection, Kendal, I reformulated the disposal policy and reviewed collections management procedures and documentation systems. At SOAS, I was a member of the Brunei Gallery Advisory Panel where I was involved in reviewing and approving exhibition proposals and new acquisitions.

With Dr. Christian Luczanits, I put in an application for an Arts & Humanities Research Council grant on 'Tibetan Buddhist Monastery Collections Today'. This is a project to research Tibetan Buddhist monastery museums in Ladakh and Nepal over a three year period. If successful, it will result in a workshop (2017) and publications (2018-19).

“The Alphawood scholars demonstrated a high level of commitment throughout and proved to be highly motivated students, keen to learn. Almost without exception, their course assessments were amongst the highest in any of my classes.”

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### Teaching

- Museums, Anthropology and the Arts of Asia and Africa (MA, 19 students)
- Collecting and Curating Buddhist Art in the Museum (MA, 24 students)
- Museums and Museology (UG, 25 students)
- Representing China in Museums (UG, 15 students)

### Edited Books

- Tythacott and Arvanitis (eds) *Museums and Restitution: New Practices, New Approaches*, Ashgate: Farnham (2014).
- Tythacott (ed) *Collecting and Displaying ‘Summer Palace’ objects in Britain and France* (forthcoming).

### Journal articles

- Tythacott, ‘The power of taste: the dispersal of the Berkeley Smith collection of Chinese ceramics at Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum (1921-1960)’ *Journal of the History of Collections* (2015).
- Tythacott, ‘Trophies of War: Representing ‘Summer Palace’ Loot in Military Museums in the UK’, in *Museum and Society* (2015).

### Book chapters:

- Tythacott and Arvanitis, *Museums and Restitution: An Introduction*, Ashgate: Farnham (2014), pp 1-18.
- Tythacott, ‘British travels in China during the Opium Wars (1839-1860): Shifting Images and Perceptions’, in Hill, K. (ed) *Travels in the Nineteenth Century: Narratives, Histories and Collections*, Ashgate: Farnham (forthcoming, 2015).

### Book reviews:

- Tythacott, review of ‘Heritage Management, Tourism, and Governance in China: Managing the Past to Serve the Present’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies* Vol. , 21 (8) (2014) pp. 841-842.

### Editing and refereeing:

- Managing Editor, *Museums and Society* – Assessing, co-ordinating 3 peer reviews for each submission, refereeing, editing and processing submissions for publication (3 issues per year). Annual report written

for Managing Editors meeting in April.

- Steering Committee Member, Leverhulme International Network for the project ‘*Evaluating Methods of Aesthetic Enquiry Across Disciplines*’, from November 2014.
- Research Workshop Grant Application referee, *Asia’s Sacred Objects in Glasgow’s Secular Spaces: Past, Present, and Future*, Royal Society of Edinburgh, September 2014.
- Book proposal referee, ‘Constructing East Asia’s Past: Early 20<sup>th</sup> century archaeological collections in European museums’, for Berghahn, November 2014.

### PhD students: supervision and completions

- Hee Jung Lee (1<sup>st</sup> supervisor, completed 2015) *Exploring visual modernity and national identity in modern China: Fu Baoshi’s self-awareness and critical response during the Sino-Japanese war (1937-1945)*.
- Stephanie Tredan (1<sup>st</sup> supervisor, since 2013) *Stuck in transit: The future of unknown Australian Indigenous Human Remains and claims for the return of Human Remains perceived as Cultural Material*.
- Heidi Tan (1<sup>st</sup> supervisor, since 2014) *Curating the Sacred: Pagoda Museums in Myanmar*.
- Elizabeth Reid (1<sup>st</sup> supervisor, since 2015) *An investigation into the meaning and significance of the exhibitions of Chinese art held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery between 1901 and 1934*.
- Miranda Bruce Mitford (2<sup>nd</sup> supervisor, since 2014) *From Natural History to Wayang Java 1811-1816 as seen through the collection of Thomas Stamford Raffles*.
- Helen Glaister (2<sup>nd</sup> supervisor, since 2015) *Collecting in Public and Private: the Ionides Collection of Chinese Export Porcelain (1920-1970)*.
- John Johnston (3<sup>rd</sup> supervisor, since 2015) *Jiangxi Landmarks on Jingdezhen Porcelain of the 18th and 19th Centuries with Special Reference to Tengwang Ge*.

### PhD examinations:

- Chengxi Dong, *The Early History of Museums in China*. SOAS, 2015



# The Banteay Chhmar Field School

## Scoping project

This year I have had the fantastic opportunity to lead a collaborative project to scope a SAAAP Field School and associated Conservation Programme at the 13th-century Cambodian temple of Banteay Chhmar.

Generous support from the Alphawood Foundation enabled a project launch in September 2015. In the first project month an international research and conservation team led by the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts (MCFA) of Cambodia undertook an intensive site survey at the temple before travelling to London to present findings and discuss possibilities for collaboration with SAAAP. The MCFA delegation was led by the Minister herself, Mrs. Phoeung Sackona.

In addition to Cambodian and international art, archaeology and conservation experts, the delegation included key members of the Minister's cabinet, the Royal University of Fine Arts and the National Museum of Phnom Penh, two institutions which come under the Ministry. Other key project partners represented at the meetings included Global Heritage Fund, Friends

of Khmer Culture, Inc., and Heritage Watch. Jim McDonough, Executive Director of the Alphawood Foundation also attended the London meetings.

The creation of a Field School is aimed at making a transformative contribution to heritage management in the Southeast Asian region. It will serve as a strong and innovative complement to the academic programme in London, while also supporting research, pedagogical and professional initiatives in-region.

The precise contours of the Field School are currently under discussion. A few principles drive its conception: grounding in an active conservation programme; close collaboration with Cambodian and other Southeast Asian partners from project conception to implementation; incorporation of SAAAP students and alumni; delivery of a broad inter-disciplinary programme integrating but not limited to technical training, with the aim of enabling students to develop critical skills in heritage management.



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The final component of the Scoping Project is scheduled for December 2015, when I will travel to Cambodia to work with the MCFA-led team alongside my SAAAP colleagues, Christian Luczanits, Louise Tythacott and Peter Sharrock. As a group we will review conservation plans in situ, at Banteay Chhmar temple; visit documentation centres and teaching facilities in the neighbouring Angkor temple region; visit the National Museum of Phnom Penh and the provincial museum adjacent to Banteay Chhmar; and visit the Royal University of Fine Arts. Official meetings will be held with the Minister and her team; the Director of Antiquities responsible for the restitution of stolen art; provincial officials, Angkor management officials, the Director of the National and provincial museums as well as museum staff, the Rector of the University of Fine Arts and the Dean of the Department of Art and Archaeology, as well as departmental teaching staff.

The trip will conclude with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between SOAS and the Ministry. A full proposal for the Field School and Conservation programme will be developed for submission to the Alphawood Foundation on the basis of this Scoping work.

**- Professor Ashley Thompson**

*Left: The delegation from the Cambodian Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts at the SOAS Brunei Building in September 2014, with SAAAP staff and Alphawood Scholar Samnang Kim (far right).*

*Right: Ruins at Banteay Chhmar, Cambodia.*



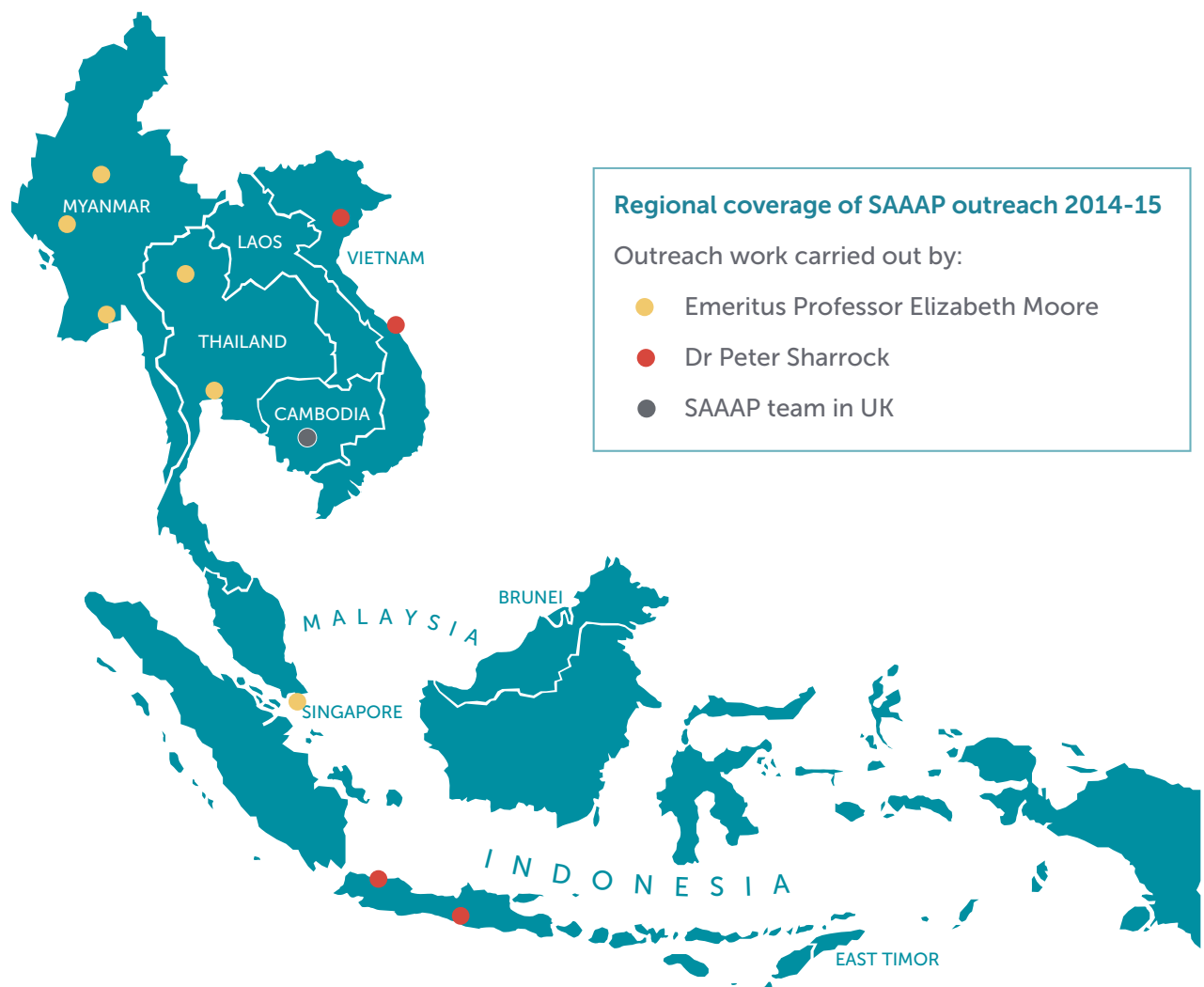
# SAAAP Outreach 2014-15

## Introduction and overview

The SAAAP Outreach sub-group is dedicated to identifying strategic regional partner institutions, establishing their research and pedagogical needs through consultation visits by SOAS Southeast Asian specialists and providing the best international support achievable. It develops sustained relationships with appropriate scholarship candidate pools and formal

partnerships with select Southeast Asian institutions, including government ministries, universities, museums, art galleries and NGOs.

In this section Dr Peter Sharrock and Emeritus Professor Elizabeth Moore will detail the highlights from their outreach activities in the region throughout the year.





# SAAAP Outreach 2014-15

Dr Peter Sharrock

2014-15 has been a productive year for the SAAAP Outreach sub-group. I travelled to Vietnam and Indonesia where I held a number of meetings with potential Alphawood scholars and forged important network contacts with museums and educational institutes. Some key achievements this year include:

## Vietnam

The first SAAAP Outreach visit to Vietnam produced four initial outcomes:

- a proposed formal SOAS link with the Vietnam Institute of Culture and Art Studies (VICAS);
- a proposal for a joint seminar on Ly Dynasty Buddhist art with participation by the relevant museums;
- a joint project to produce a catalogue in English and Vietnamese for the Da Nang Museum of Cham Sculpture;
- An agreement to disseminate SAAAP documents on Alphawood scholarships to prospective students and curators.

In Hanoi, Nguyen Phuong Hoa, the Deputy Director-General for International Cooperation at the Ministry of Culture, Sports & Tourism identified the SOAS Programme's official counterpart as the Vietnam Institute of Culture and Art Studies. She said the Institute's Director General Dr Tu Thi Loan would be the official who would sign a Memorandum of Understanding covering all SAAAP activities in Vietnam.

I met with several museum directors in the capital, who – in anticipation of my visit – had prepared a joint proposal for the organisation of a seminar, eventually annual, involving academics from the Universities of Fine Arts in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh, Vietnamese museum curators and SOAS Southeast Asia experts. There would also be representation from a new Centre for Cultural Heritage Conservation and Promotion, which

SOAS would be invited to collaborate with. They proposed a first seminar on The Buddhist art of the Ly Dynasty in the various museum collections.

In central Vietnam, Vo Van Thang, the Director of the Museum of Cham Sculpture in Da Nang, invited SAAAP to help form a research and publication team, including himself, to produce the museum's first catalogue of its most important 100 Cham sculptures. He foresaw a two or three year project to produce volumes in English and in Vietnamese, in which the museum would meet all costs on the Vietnamese side, including publication, and SAAAP would meet SOAS costs.

## Indonesia

Dr Harry Widiyanto, Director of Cultural Heritage Preservation and Museums, is one of Indonesia's leading archaeologists. He proposed that SAAAP draft a Memorandum of Understanding covering all academic and archaeological collaboration with Indonesian institutions, which he will personally present for signature to Director General Professor Kacung Marijan at the Ministry of Education and Culture. This document would provide a framework for joint seminars and master-classes held with Indonesian institutions.

Heads of the Institute of Indonesian Art and the Faculty of Archaeology at the University of Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta said they would welcome a permanent link with SAAAP and would fund SOAS staffers participating in an annual series of seminars and master-classes at UGM. SOAS research into Indonesian monuments and cultural heritage would be fully facilitated. SAAAP documents have been distributed to students and a list of potential candidates will be sent for the 2016 cohort of Alphawood scholars.

- Dr Peter Sharrock



# SAAAP Outreach 2014-15

Emeritus Professor Elizabeth H. Moore

The 2014-15 academic year brought our first four students from Myanmar, the main focus of my outreach during the past session. More come in January as we have deepened and widened the SAAAP network and awareness in the country. I have also been considering opportunities for the SAAAP alumni that will return to Myanmar in September 2016. Successful meetings were also held in Singapore and our applicants from Thailand substantially rose for the 2015-16 intake.

For the purposes of this report I would like to draw out some events of particular note from my activities in Myanmar this year.

The country is in the midst of rapid development with many gaps between headlines and everyday life for teachers, students, curators and independent scholars and cultural organisations. Official procedures have often slowed or been obscured in the face of political uncertainty. In the midst of this combination of change and stasis, heritage trusts and other non-governmental and grass roots organisations have blossomed. Official recognition dates to new laws passed in 2011 allowing registration of associations at local, regional and national levels.

One such organisation is the Myanmar Archaeology Association (MAA) where I am one of three senior consultants along with colleagues from UNESCO and the museum fields. Founded in 2013, the MAA is the sole national level group in Myanmar and has 140 members – teachers, students, independent scholars and senior consultants. The MAA holds monthly meetings, sponsors field trips, and while still looking to create an office has begun a library in the front room of one of its members. They have participated as a non-governmental group in training and planning meetings of UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture. These are very new developments in a country that for the past 50 years has been marked by an absence of

communication between government and others. The MAA's Secretary General is current Alphawood Scholar Thu Ya Aung, and you can read more about the organisation in his section to this report.

## Dagon University one-day workshop

On the first of July 2015, SAAAP hosted a one-day collaborative workshop in association with Dagon University, UNESCO Yangon, and the MAA.

Following welcoming addresses, a series of workshops ran through the day. Sessions included:

- Prof. Dr Kyawt Hmu Aung on 'Konedawgyi Temple at Bagan'
- Tha Zin on 'Votive Tablets'
- Khaing Pyae Sone on 'Wall paintings of the Konbaung era'
- Khaing Myitzu Wai on 'Narrative paintings of the Buddha at Bagan'
- Kyawt kay Khaing on 'Post-Bagan stucco near Bagan'
- Ma Tin Nilar Moe on 'Lay Myat Hna temple, Minnanthu 11th century'
- Khin Phyu Phyu Tun on 'Floral Wall paintings'
- Naing Naing Lay Maw on 'Payathonzu 13th century CE art at Bagan'
- Soe Win Naing on 'Dagondaing or 'prayer post' Evolution'
- Naing Soe on 'Monasteries of Myinkaba'

The SAAAP Project Board has agreed to the Dagon University Memorandum of Understanding with finalisation awaiting only the exchange of the signed copies by the Rector of Dagon University and the SOAS Director.



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The discussions held during and following the one-day workshop at Dagon University led to the focus of the Bagan Project in the village of Myinkaba in the southern part of the ancient city. Two research trips were undertaken by MAA, some of whose members are teachers at Dagon University, to document the monasteries and festivals of Myinkaba.

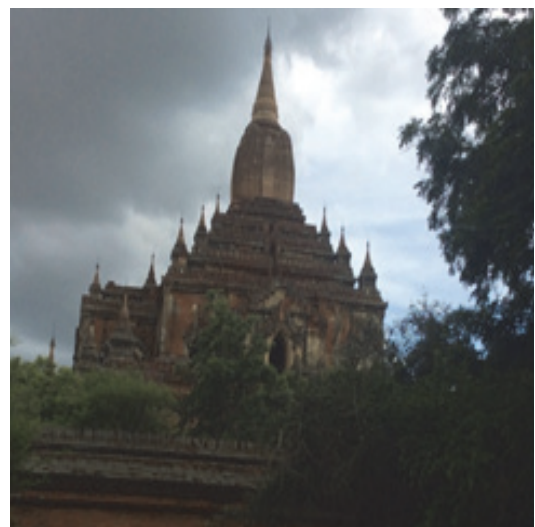
### **Bagan Project at Myinkaba village**

Following our discussions at the workshop, we decided to focus our collaborative research project on the social, religious and economic life of the local population of Myinkaba village at the vast monumental site of Bagan. The city is commonly dated to the 9th to 13th century CE but was legendarily founded from a confederation of villages in 102 CE. Remarkably, the 21st century CE life of Bagan continues to revolve around its villages. We chose Myinkaba for its rich combination of archaeology, temple and stupa architecture and paintings, crafts such as lacquer and unique temple festivals such as the Manuha temple's Ayoke Thwin festival noted in the outline and illustrations following.

The wider significance of the villages and localised production for interpreting the inter-relationships between the social, religious and economic life of Bagan is a field of emerging research and something we hope to contribute to the on-going process of developing a UNESCO World Heritage List nomination dossier for the site. Despite studies of the world-class temple 9th to 13th century CE architecture, there is little research to understand the emergence, flowering and sustenance of Buddhism at Bagan.

I am acting as consultant to the research project, which we are carrying out with through our in-process MOU with Dagon University and in collaboration with MAA and the people of Myinkaba.

**- Emeritus Professor Elizabeth H. Moore**



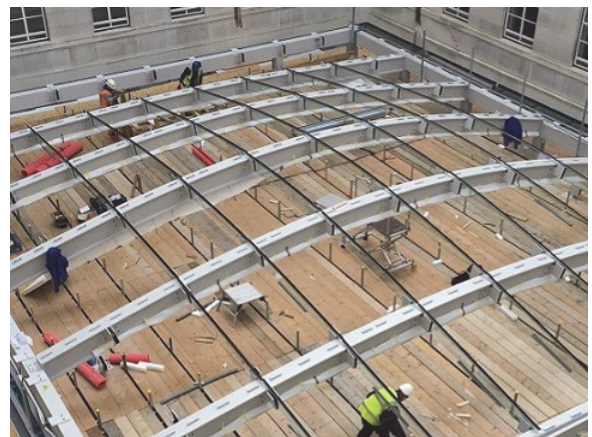
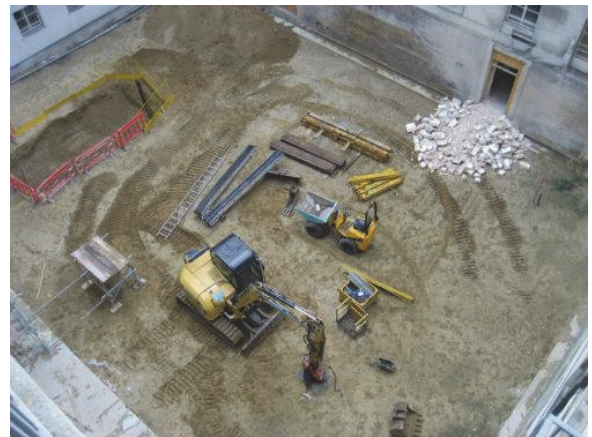
# The Capital Gift

## SOAS into Senate House North Block

As 2016 rapidly approaches, SOAS nears a historic transformation of its campus with its expansion into Senate House North Block. The development will see SOAS occupy a unified campus for the first time since its move to Bloomsbury from the original Finsbury Circus site. This will serve to strengthen the SOAS community, while providing clear benefits for students and staff who currently have to travel between Russell Square and the Kings Cross Vernon Square campus.

The redevelopment will furnish SOAS with state-of-the-art learning and teaching facilities, informal learning spaces, a combined student services hub to cater to all of our students needs from a single point of access, and also an iconic space in which the SOAS community will be centred around - the Fred Eychaner Atrium. All at SOAS remain immensely grateful for the generosity of the Alphawood Foundation in providing a £5m grant as part of its landmark £20m gift, earmarked towards the renovation of this space.

As this section of the report will demonstrate, the construction and renovation project is rapidly progressing, with the final look and feel of the Atrium starting to emerge from the building site that preceded it.



*Right, top to bottom:*

*October 2014 – Rubble has been removed and a level surface created. Work begins on installing a 14,000 litre capacity rainwater harvester.*

*July 2015 – The concrete floor has been created, while the construction of the overlooking balconies and the central staircase structure is well under way.*

*October 2015 – Construction of the glass roof in progress.*

# The Capital Gift

## Project focus: the glass roof

A key focal point of the Fred Eychaner Atrium, and the SHNB development as a whole, will be the unique double-curvature glass roof over the central courtyard of Senate House. A more traditional single curvature would create a barrel-vault shape, while a double-curvature design creates a more visually arresting 'pillow' effect above the central space. The roof will create a bright and spacious piazza where students and staff can relax, converse, or study.

The roof will be made up of double-glazed panels, each with five layers of glass providing strength, light and heat reflective properties. While the glass will keep heat in during the colder months, which is important for both financial and environmental reasons, an intelligent ventilation design will ensure the temperature remains ideal even on hot days. When the air gets too hot or stale, the building management system will pump cool air taken from around the building into the space. It has been tested to be strong enough to be walked over from above, which will spare future logistical issues with clearing debris from the roof.

The roof will be supported by internal columns, which touch the walls of Senate House but are not fixed to them, meaning there is limited damage to the listed building.

Rain will drain from the roof into 14,000-litre rainwater harvester, where it will be cleaned using ultraviolet light and redirected to a tank on the 6th floor of the building and used in the toilets. This will radically improve the building's water consumption.

The glass will be almost completely colourless, ensuring that the classic art deco façade of Senate House is incorporated into the visual identity of the space. This focus on balancing the heritage and history of Senate House with our need for a modern, state-of-the-art learning environment is at the heart of the SHNB renovation project.



*Above, top to bottom:  
An element of the structural framework of the roof is lifted into the courtyard by crane.  
The panels for the glass skirting around the main roof assembly is fixed in place.  
Workers fixing the glass beams to the framework.*

# The Capital Gift

## Progress update

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### SHNB General progress update

Since the last report, construction works have continued on-site, with the fundamental structural works and service installation being completed. The contractor has reported a possible eight week delay to the completion of some works. This delay only affects limited areas of the building. The planned opening date will not need to be moved and the Fred Eychaner Atrium is currently on schedule for completion to deadline.

### Mitigation of planning delays

- One of the challenges of this project was always going to be creating a 21st Century university environment within a 1930's building. We have worked with our historic building advisors to ensure that heritage requirements are met whilst incorporating modern services and facilities.
- The relationship with London Borough of Camden Planning Department has remained professional with minor changes and conditions being dealt with appropriately.

### Design

- Design development over the last period has been mainly concerned with technical detail of how the building will fit together and operate. Major design decisions had all taken place at an earlier stage.
- The design for landscaping around the building is being progressed by sub-contractor Rock Townsend.

### Construction Phase

- Works have progressed well with all structural works, demolitions and alterations being successfully completed.

- The refurbishment of the original building is taking shape. New electrical, data, audio-visual, heating and water services have been carefully threaded through the building and have now been hidden from sight.
- Plaster and carpentry repairs along with the relaying of original floors is now taking place.
- Works to the external areas of the building are nearing completion.

### The Fred Eychaner Atrium progress update

Significant progress has been made to works on the Fred Eychaner Atrium:

- The concrete balcony/mezzanine floors and the steps are structurally complete. The final finish will be applied to both once the glass roof is complete in order to avoid degradation of any works through exposure to the elements (Figure 1).
- Walls have been knocked through between the central courtyard and the registry area. This will allow more natural light into the Atrium (Figure 2).
- The installation of the new structure to support the glazed courtyard roof took place over the summer, and has since been joined to the original building. The glass beams have been affixed, as has most of the glass skirting around the main roof structure. The next stage, in the New Year, will be to affix the curved glass panels to the structure, enclosing the final space that will become the Fred Eychaner Atrium (Figure 3).



Above left column from top to bottom:

Figure 1: The completed concrete and steel structure of the steps;

Figure 2: The wall between the Atrium and Registry area has been knocked through to bring more light into the Atrium;

Figure 3: The structural framework of the roof, and glass skirting around the main roof assembly.

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