

Placing the Gods

Year 1-3 Vertical Studio 2008

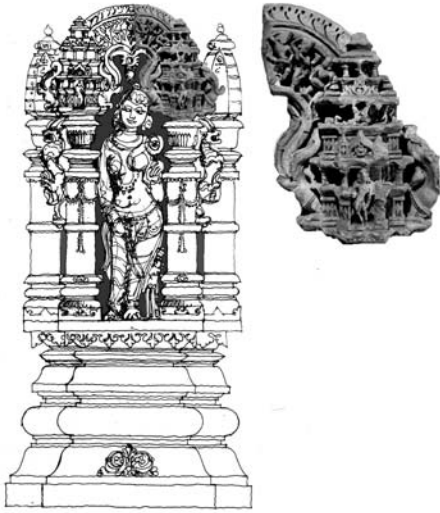


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This vertical studio option has a 'real' context in the large research project 'The Indian Temple: Production, Place, Patronage' www.cf.ac.uk/archi/PRASADA_IndianTemple.php on which PRASADA, the WSA's centre for South Asian architecture, is collaborating with the Department of Asia at the British Museum. An objective of 'The Indian Temple' project is to catalogue a section of the BM's magnificent collection of Indian sculpture (c. 2nd century BC to 13th century AD), and to explore how this collection might be more meaningfully and imaginatively displayed. Its contents were originally conceived, made and venerated as parts of subtle iconographic programmes, which in turn formed just an aspect of great and complex sacred monuments. Once integral to an architectural whole, the sculptures now sit as specimens in cases or on pedestals.

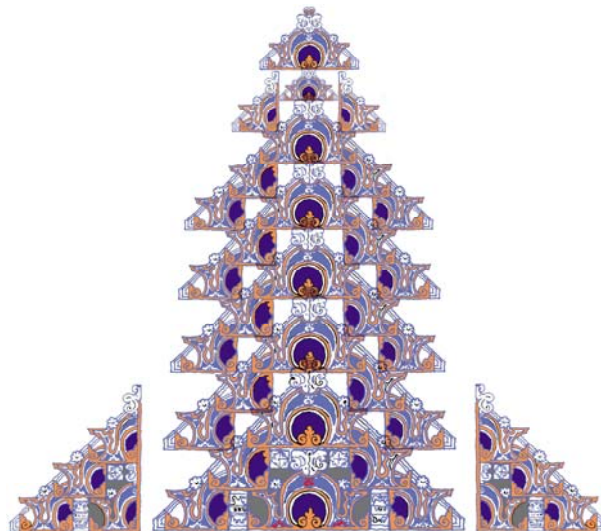
The vertical studio group will visit the BM and be given special access to its reserve collection. Each member will study selected pieces, while the entire group will consider the display of the collection as a whole. The results will be shown as an exhibition.

A central question will be how to convey something of the context of the sculptures, of the world from which they have come. There are many dimensions to this question: social, political, religious, metaphysical... Stylistically, how does each piece fit in its tradition, in time and place? How was it imagined and made, organisationally and materially? We need to take account of all these aspects, but it is to the exploration of the architectural context that we can best contribute as architects. The architectural context has to be explained and illustrated, and perhaps it can also in some way be recreated, so as to form an appropriate frame for people's experience of the objects.



Reconstructed setting for an architectural fragment (AH)

Should architectural settings be drawn or carved, projected, made with mirrors or with holograms? Can spaces be moulded to the movement of the human body *through* a temple, or to the cosmogonic motion expressed by the architectural, divine body, *of* a temple (go to www.ochs.org.uk/sdc07/index.html, download from 'session six' and run the images through very fast)? These questions will be explored through computer graphics and other virtual means, but equally through hand drawings and physical models, so as not to lose touch with the material presence of the works, nor to deny the aura which they may emanate when properly placed.



References:

John Guy, *Indian Temple Sculpture* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2007)
Adam Hardy, *The Temple Architecture of India* (Chichester: Wiley, 2007)