

**Neville Agnew | Getty Conservation Institute***Research, Implementation, Exhibition—The Quarter-Century Partnership of the Dunhuang Academy with the Getty*

The Dunhuang Academy and the Getty Conservation Institute have collaborated on the conservation of the Mogao Grottoes of Dunhuang continuously since 1989, shortly after the site was inscribed on the World Heritage List under all six cultural criteria. Over that time many individual projects were undertaken. These range across a very wide spectrum of activities, from scientific research into causes of deterioration and control of sand migration to drafting a master plan for the site to implementation of wall painting conservation in the Late Tang dynasty Cave 85 and to studies on safe visitor carrying capacity in order to meet the burgeoning rise in tourism. Often multiple projects were undertaken concurrently, with teams drawn up from the staff and consultants of both institutions. International conferences and colloquia were organized, and staff exchanges built both personal and professional relationships. A culminating event of the collaboration is an exhibition in 2016 at the Getty Center in which hand-painted copies of Caves 285, 320, and 275 and artefacts from the Library Cave will be presented. A signal achievement was the development, in which Dunhuang Academy staff played a key role, of national guidelines for conservation and management of heritage sites in China, the so-called China Principles. This document, promulgated nationally by ICOMOS China, with approval of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, informed all of the interventions on the site and underlies management decisions. The essence of the document is preservation of values (artistic, scientific, and historic) under the existing law after rigorous assessments of significance.

The partnership was based from the outset on clearly defined objectives agreed to by both parties. Each side contributes in terms of personnel and funding in what can stand as a model of international collaboration. Given the new challenges that are emerging in the 21st century—climate change, mass tourism, pressure for privatization of heritage sites for profit—it has become ever more critical for an integrated and comprehensive approach to conservation and management of iconic sites like Mogao. In China, given its dynamism, this will be an especially important need. The Getty Conservation Institute, in partnering with the Dunhuang Academy, has played its modest part in the long recovery of Mogao after its decline and travails of the early 20th century. Today's Dunhuang Academy is responding in ways that are at the forefront of management and conservation, as befits this extraordinary site.

**Fan Jinshi | Director Emerita, Dunhuang Academy***Dunhuang and My Life*

Director Fan will share her experiences from over fifty years of living in Dunhuang and working at the Dunhuang Academy. Her first visit to the Mogao Caves as a student left a profound impression on her, and her deep interest in the site sustained her and inspired her, as she helped shape, with grace and tenacity, the direction of research, conservation efforts, and protection of the Mogao Caves.

**Sarah E. Fraser | Institut für Kunstgeschichte Ostasiens, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg***Narrative Structures in Dunhuang Murals: Dialogic Space of Debate Narratives*

Distinct narrative formats were developed for the many types of Buddhist paintings depending on their locations in the medieval temple. These formats included: large wall paintings in circumambulation paths, banners hung on specific occasions, small prayer books, and sets of banners comprised of many individual paintings. Some temples contained thousands of painted figures and scores of themes. Murals were also arranged dialogically across cave-shrines to “speak” with each other thematically across grotto spaces. These included the *Debate between Vimakakirti and Manjusri* and the *Magic Competition (Laoducha jingbian)*. Sariputra and Vimalakirti were paired diagonally as narrative heroes across the diagonal axis, both “winning” their debates or contests. Sariputra appears in both of these transformation tableaux, yet performs a different role in each. Featured as a critical narrative hero in the *Magic Competition*, Sariputra serves to warn against *upaya*, or skillful means, in the *Debate* narrative. In the 10th–13th centuries, many of the mural themes become reduced in complexity and were adapted for hand scrolls. Other cases to be discussed include: *Queen Vaidehi’s Visualizations around Amitabha’s Western Paradise* and *Maitreya’s Paradise*; the topographical “map” of Wutaishan; and chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra.

The second topic to be examined is the extensive renovation of the caves during the mid-10th century, especially the façade repairs made by Cao Yuanzhong (r. 944/945–74) and Lady Zhai. This essay will explore how these 10th-century structural supports, executed as karmic good works by the Guiyijin leader and his wife, can aid in our understanding of the caves as architectural spaces, and, further, will examine the value of the comprehensive photography by James and Lucy Lo in the 1940s, before walkways were added.

**Jun Hu | Northwestern University***Radiant Canopies: Cave Ceiling Designs at Dunhuang ca. 600*

Before full-fledged depictions of *Pure Lands* on cave walls began to emerge in the Tang period (618–906), the cave ceilings at Dunhuang are where some of the most lavish artistic efforts were invested, and where dynamic changes in pictorial design occurred. This paper examines one brief albeit critical episode in the history of ceiling design at Dunhuang. Toward the end of the 6th century, that is, between the Northern Zhou (557–581) and the Sui (581–618) periods, cave ceilings began to be occupied by lavishly painted narratives. These narrative paintings often take the form of scrolls that cover multiple registers as if these episodic vignettes have radiated from the center of the ceiling. The visual and religious interest of these spectacles is sometimes further underscored by lavish gilding of the Buddha figures. In this paper I shall explore the principles behind the organization of these compelling visual narratives, the possible models they were derived from, and, most importantly, their architectural significance—how such ceiling designs inform us of the meanings of cave interiors at Dunhuang.

**Mimi Gardner Gates | Chairman, Dunhuang Foundation; Director Emerita,  
Seattle Art Museum***What is Dunhuang?*

Mimi Gates will introduce the site of Dunhuang and its history, from the beginning of cave building by the mid-4th century to its abandonment after the 14th century to 1900, the year of the stunning discovery of the Library Cave, a repository of more than 40,000 manuscripts and other devotional objects, including paintings, embroideries, sketches, and pounces.

Fundamental questions about Dunhuang and its art will be posed, among them: Why was this immense complex of caves created in the Dunhuang area? Why in this particular location? When did cave building begin? Who were the donors who commissioned the caves? What is the relationship between spirituality and artistic practice?

**Annette Juliano | Rutgers University***Reflections on Early Dunhuang Caves: Textiles, Thrones, and Canopies*

During my scholarly career of more than thirty years, I have been a regular visitor to the Mogao Caves, drawn like so many others by the extraordinary richness of the painting, sculpture, and architecture. Each visit brings me renewed inspiration and raises ever more intriguing issues, whether exploring the source of a painted motif or decoding the iconography of a distinctive Buddha triad. To a significant degree, this continued fascination derives from the geographic and cultural location of the Dunhuang cave complex at what scholars have chronicled as the

crossroads of the oases or “Silk Route.” The early caves, especially, from the Northern Liang to early Tang, manifest the strands of cultural influences traveling from Central, South, and West

Asia that converge in the imagery of the caves; at times, these strands appear to mingle uneasily with traditional Chinese tropes, for example, the images of traditional Han watchtowers. Other influences are more subtly and successfully adapted, assimilated, or transformed—making the process of teasing out the Western sources even more challenging.

My presentation will explore the convergence of several Western strands or sources manifested first in the famous early cave and image of Maitreya in Cave 275. My interest is in the use of painted textile-like patterns or the representation of a painted textile decorating the surfaces of architectural structures and ceilings, one example being the textile draped on the triangular or trapezoidal-shaped back of Maitreya’s cross-legged lion throne, another being the ceiling canopies from Northern Zhou to early Tang. The beautiful and more familiar textile patterns painted on the clothing of Sui and Tang attendant bodhisattvas, or on the occasionally visible upper robe (*uttarasanga*) of the Buddha and donor figures, are not my primary focus.

As a number of scholars have already recognized, this cross-ankled Maitreya of Cave 275, seated on this type of lion throne and wearing a crown with three prominent disks, seems to be a specific iconographic configuration. This distinctive configuration also appears in Caves 254 and 259, as well as in other frontier cave temple complexes—Binglingsi’s Cave 169 in Gansu and Yungang Caves, 21, 19, 15, and 6–12, in Shanxi. It can also be found in related Gandharan stone reliefs.

Certainly, at Dunhuang, the most extensive use of painted textile patterns is found in the central ceiling decoration with a *tianjing*, a square containing two rotated squares which are sometimes recessed and surrounded by varied painted textile patterns, fringes, and tassels. More elaborate larger ceiling textiles became canopies, with a central *tianjing* or instead a square filled with a lotus or complex floral medallions. These later canopies from Sui and early Tang often have been painted to evoke a greater tactile sense of rippling or moving cloth embellished with tassels. I will consider a few examples of canopy construction, motifs, and designs, whenever possible tracing the strands of connections back to cultures farther West.

Finally, the examples discussed and the questions raised may help elucidate the complex role of textile patterns in the Dunhuang caves. One example, for the Maitreya: What is the deeper importance of the cloth-covered lion throne? Notably, these imitations of textile patterns and textiles served not merely as purely decorative elements but were transformative to cave interiors, enhancing the experience of the sacred space, religious meaning, and more. Understandably, my reflections on textiles, thrones, and canopies are constrained by centuries of reworking, repainting, damage, and repair affecting many of the cave walls and sculptures.

**Wei-Cheng Lin | University of Chicago***What Did “Architecture” Do in Visualizing Dunhuang?*

When speaking of the architecture of Buddhist image caves, including those in Dunhuang, one usually refers to the physical space hewn from the cliff that provides interiors for enshrining and venerating Buddhist iconography. The rock-cut architecture, as it is so often called, thus reverses the normal building procedure, focusing primarily on space, rather than structure. Scholars, accordingly, have concentrated on the style of cave space—in the case of Dunhuang, a few major types (e.g., central-column caves, caves with a western niche, central-altar caves, etc.) that evolved over time in correspondence to varied religious contents created in different historical periods. Without structural concern, the rock-cut architecture, rather than being built in a greater variety of styles, was interestingly limited by type. Were there factors, other than practical ones, that underlay the spatial typology? Was the cave interior space, following the topology, constructed in ways that decided how the iconography was structured and understood? In this paper, I hope to demonstrate that the rock-cut architecture actually played a much more important role than we expected in helping the practitioner visualize the Buddhist world materialized in murals and statues inside the physical cave. Ultimately, I shall suggest, the “architecture” of Dunhuang caves cannot be defined without taking into account how it worked to mediate, communicate, and visualize the religious content and to evoke visual and kinetic experiences embedded in any given cave.

**Maria Menshikova | The State Hermitage Museum***The Russian-Turkestan Expedition and Dunhuang Material*

Many Western explorers made expeditions to the Dunhuang area in the early 20th century, mapping, documenting, photographing, and even acquiring by varying means artifacts, art, and manuscripts from the Mogao caves near Dunhuang, as well as other sites. Sergei Feodorovitch Oldenburg (1863–1934), a scholar in the Russian Academy of Sciences, mounted several expeditions for study and research of cave sites. In 1914 Oldenburg led a group consisting of the painter and ethnographer Samuil Martinovitch Dudin, the photographer B. F. Romberg, the topographer N. A. Smirnov, and the cartographer Birkinberg, among others, to Dunhuang. They stayed at Dunhuang for four months, photographing the site, making descriptions of the caves, drawing the plans and facades, and painting watercolor and ink paintings of the murals and sculptures. Today, the collection of Dunhuang materials at the State Hermitage Museum is a reminder of the Oldenburg expeditions and the research contributions he made to the field of Buddhist studies and Dunhuang studies.

**Zhang Hongtu | Independent Artist***Dunhuang, No Boundaries*

My presentation will focus on my experience of Dunhuang during my first visit in 1981—why I was shocked by the Dunhuang murals and how what I saw and what I experienced influenced me to open both my mind and my eyes.

**Zhao Shengliang | Dunhuang Academy***The Significance of James C. M. Lo's Photographs of the Caves at Dunhuang*

The Lo Archive is a unique archive of over 2,000 photographs, created in 1943–44. At the time when James Lo first came to photograph Dunhuang, the Dunhuang Institute was about to be founded, and the Republican government had by then begun to note the importance of the research on and preservation of the Dunhuang caves. Because the caves had long been under no official administration, the conditions for photographing the site were extremely poor. Nevertheless, in over a year, James Lo's was the first meticulously planned, systematic attempt to capture, comprehensively, the entire Dunhuang site. The subjects of these photographs include almost all of the caves that were accessible by any means. They range from overviews of entire caves or their main contents to close-up shots of mural and sculpture details. In both its meticulousness and comprehensiveness, James Lo's feat was unprecedented. This paper will discuss the importance of the Lo Archive in terms of its historical, documentary, and aesthetic value.