

Abteilung für Asiatische und Islamische Kunstgeschichte WiSe 2024:

**Vortrag von Dr. Vishvesh Prabhakar
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**Negative Space: Photography as Strategy in
Late-Colonial Old Goa**

Montag, 20.01.2025, Beginn: 18.15 Uhr

Abteilung für Asiatische und Islamische Kunstgeschichte, Adenauerallee 10, ÜR (EG)

<https://uni-bonn.zoom-x.de/j/65457930296?pwd=dFSisXm0janPDpKlqdJNxSPY2Jyee5.1>

Despite arriving in British India in 1840, only one year after its invention in Europe, it was only in 1884 that Portuguese-held Goa got its first professional photography studio: Souza & Paul. This studio extensively photo-documented Goa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, partnering with state authorities. One such commission was the 1890 exposition of the sacred remains of St. Francis Xavier when the state had the studio photograph the monuments of Old Goa. Vestiges of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, those monuments came to evidence the decline of the erstwhile capital of the *Estado da Índia*, with only a few magnificent buildings surviving the heyday of the empire. While Souza & Paul's 1890 photographs focus on the architecture of Old Goa, much gets left out of the frame, especially considering that the negative space in their pictures was previously occupied by buildings in a thriving early modern city.



© Souza & Paul, Central Library, Pajim

To complement the ruination of the city, the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth centuries saw no new developments, demonstrating the ongoing poverty of the colonial state. Nevertheless, the empty spaces surrounding Old Goa's early modern architecture allowed photography to spectacularly render monuments of the past in relief while obscuring the decline of the impoverished colonial empire.

In examining Souza & Paul's archival photographs, this lecture inverts the gaze of colonial visuality; although the striking mix of European influenced architecture is meant to be the punctum of Old Goa's late-nineteenth century photographs, it is the negative spaces - which hide the ruination of the city - that become its true punctum. The late-colonial state used the camera as a logistical tool, obscuring the ruination of Old Goa and the lack of new development. In the absence of new monuments, the administration utilised photography to showcase leftover monuments of the great imperial past to underscore colonial longevity so as to hold on to their powers during the era of decoloniality.

About the Speaker:



Vishvesh Prabhakar Kandolkar, PhD, is an Associate Professor at the Goa College of Architecture. His research on Goa's architectural history focuses on early modern church design as well as the evolution of Indo-Portuguese aesthetics from the colonial to the postcolonial period. He is the author of the book, *Goa's Bom Jesus as Visual Culture: The Basilica's Architecture, Image, History and Identity*, published by Routledge (2025). The book chronicles the visual history of the Basilica of Bom Jesus, one of the longest surviving churches from Goa's Portuguese colonial era. Kandolkar's art installation series, *This is Not the Basilica!*, drew from his research about the Basilica and was exhibited at the Sunaparanta Goa Centre for the Arts in 2021. His writing has appeared in peer-reviewed journals, including *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*, the *Oxford Journal of Hindu Studies*, *eTropic*, the *Journal of Human Values*, and *Economic and Political Weekly*.