

The Himalayas and the Great Sediment Sorting Machine



Monday, March 15, 2021 @ 12 PM CDT
Online via Zoom (registration required)
Free and open to the public.

This talk draws attention to a set of digital and handmade instruments that Anthony Acciavatti designed and constructed to develop a new way of imaging and historicizing the dynamism of the Himalayas. Using a digital camera, packaging tape, tube socks, GPS unit, PVC pipes, and the Magic Wand tool in Photoshop, these instruments and prosthetics allow the user to collect and analyze sediment and silt distributed by one of Earth's greatest sediment sorting machines. In particular, the presentation foregrounds how and why using the wrong thing for the right purpose allows a scholar to conduct an ethnographic survey of soils and silt to narrate the choreography of the monsoons and the Himalayas. With billions of tons of silt shed annually from the Himalayas across much of South Asia and Southeast Asia, the sorting and distribution of this material shapes agriculture and groundwater resources as well as dwelling and construction practices.



ANTHONY ACCIAVATTI works at the intersection of architecture and the history of science and technology. He is interested in experimental forms of scholarship, pedagogy, and design afforded by humanistic inquiry. His most recent book, *Ganges Water Machine: Designing New India's Ancient River* (Applied Research & Design, 2015), is the first comprehensive mapping and environmental history of the Ganges River Basin in over half a century. In 2016, the book was awarded the John Brinckerhoff Jackson Book Prize. He is currently completing the manuscript of his next book, *Republic of Villages*, which looks at the histories of science and design in South Asia since the late-nineteenth century. Trained in architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design and Harvard University, in the history of science at Princeton University, and a Fulbright Scholar in the department of geography and town and country planning at the University of Allahabad, Acciavatti is currently the Daniel Rose (1951) Visiting Assistant Professor in Urban Studies at Yale University.

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