The perpetual stream of images circulating through our digitally enhanced worlds demands constant interpretation. Buddhist thought attests that the struggle to locate meaning amongst a barrage of representations is not unique to the contemporary moment but rather a key dimension of being human. In this talk, I describe the plight of two Tibetan scholar monks grappling with the limits of interpretation in a fifteenth-century debate on body mandala. Tantric adepts engaging in body mandala practice transform the body into a celestial palace inhabited by buddhas through ritual acts of imagination. While Ngorchen Künga Zangpo (1382-1456) and Khêdrupjé Gélek Pelzangpo (1385-1438) disagree on the sources for performing this practice and its ritual mechanics, both embrace body mandala as a potent means of transformation. I highlight intriguing connections between ritual and commentarial practice evident in their body mandala debate. Moreover, I demonstrate the relevance of the skills of such Buddhist exegetes, guides in navigating the paradoxes of representations, for addressing contemporary debates on representation and embodiment.

**October 31, 2022 ▶ 4:00PM**

*In-person event*

**KACHINA LOUNGE, STUDENT UNION**

**1303 E. UNIVERSITY BLVD., TUCSON**

*Suggested parking: Second Street Garage*

**RAE ERIN DACHILLE**

Assistant Professor, Religious Studies and East Asian Studies, University of Arizona, author of *Searching for the Body: A Contemporary Perspective on Tibetan Buddhist Tantra*

Dr. Rae Erin Dachille (Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies, University of California at Berkeley) specializes in the religious and artistic traditions of Himalayan Buddhism. Her research focuses upon representations of the body in art, ritual, philosophy, and medicine in Tibetan and Sanskrit sources.

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[Please note that the location changed, the updated information is in red font.]