

PRESS RELEASE

**THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART'S LATEST EXHIBIT EXPLORES
TRANSFORMATION AND OTHER BENEFITS OBTAINED BY SIMPLY BEING
IN THE PRESENCE OF ART**

***“Art with Benefits: The Drigung Tradition” (Opens April 24) Examines an
800-Year-Old Artistic Practice from the Drigung Kagyu School, One of the
Most Historically Significant Schools of Tibetan Buddhism***

New York, NY (March 9, 2015) – Across all traditions of Tibetan Buddhism is the notion that a work of art has the power to transform and bestow a variety of benefits upon the beholder. Depending on the particular subject depicted in a painting, sculpture, or relic, the viewer gains such advantages as removing obstacles, acquiring merit, and purifying all sins, bringing benefits for this life and the next, simply by seeing it. Opening April 24, The Rubin Museum of Art's newest exhibit, *Art with Benefits: the Drigung Tradition*, explores this notion by exhibiting 39 works of art and objects created by one of the most important schools of Tibetan Buddhism in the 13th Century, the Drigung Kagyu School.

The Drigung Kagyu School makes the concept of benefits through art both visually and textually explicit in the artwork created by its followers. Art with Benefits highlights the distinctive and varying styles that have characterized Drigung art over its more than 800-year history through the present day, as well as the most commonly depicted subjects and the benefits they offer, including the Buddha type “Beneficial to See,” protectresses, wrathful deities, teachers, and footprints.

The exhibition is arranged thematically into nine categories, each focusing on a specific image type and the beneficial qualities ascribed to the key element represented on it. Each section will feature a quote that exemplifies their efficacy – what the image is believed to do to for the viewer. These include: The Buddha; The Teacher; The Footprint; The Hat; The Protectress; The Wrathful; The Deity; The Lotus Born; The Tree.

The exhibition also includes incredibly rare objects and some of the earliest Drigung art known (from about 1200 to the 19th century), including sacred footprints of the founder himself and examples of the image Shakyamuni Buddha “Beneficial to See.”

Examples of objects and their associated benefits on display, include:

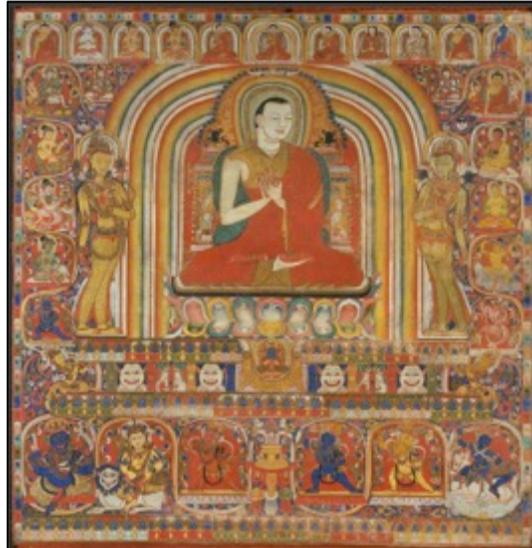
The Buddha



“All sins will be purified in a moment at the mere sight of it.”
Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa

Shakyamuni Buddha “Beneficial to See”
Drigung Kagyu School, Central Tibet; early 14th century;
Distemper on cotton; Pritzker Collection

The Teacher



“By making painted or sculpted images out of faith, you will achieve nirvana in this very life.”

Entering the Activity of the Great Pure Realm, by Deumar Geshe

Disciple of Drigungpa

Tibet; circa 1217-1235

Distemper and gold paste on cotton

Pritzker Collection

The Footprints

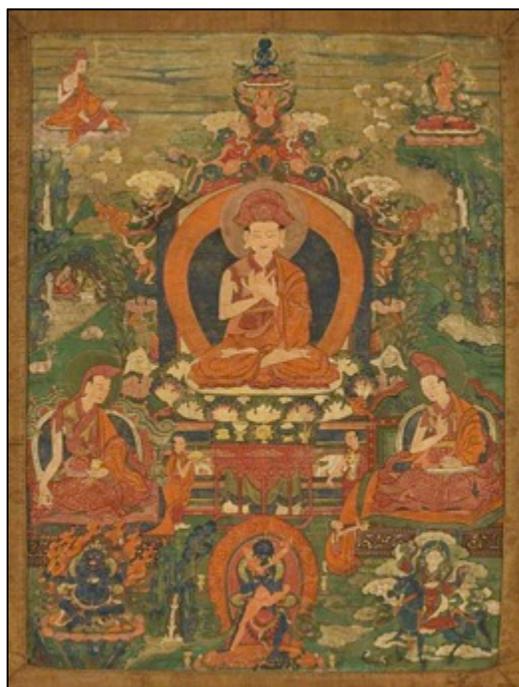


“If you wish to request a teaching from the footprints... it is no different from having been actually heard from the lama.”

Requesting Footprints by Phakmo Drupa (1110-1170)

*Drigung Founder's Footprints
Tibet; circa 1200
Dyes or thin washes of pigment on cloth
Rubin Museum of Art C2003.7.1 (HAR 65205)*

The Hat



*"The meditation hat that liberates through being seen."
Dakpo Chenga Rinpoche (1968-)*

*Drigungpa Jikten Sumgon with Two Lamas of Drigung
Central Tibet; ca. early 18th century
Rubin Museum of Art
C2006.66.555 (HAR 1034)*

Drigung Kagyu School

The Drigung Kagyu was one of the most prominent and powerful schools of Tibetan Buddhism in the Thirteenth century. Its main monastic seat, Drigung Thel Monastery, was founded in 1179 by the famous teacher Drigungpa Chenpo Jikten Sumgon (1143-1217), about 84 miles northeast of Lhasa. It flourished for a century, until it was leveled by a Mongolian Yuan army in the 1280s. Beginning in the late 17th century, Drigung developed its own distinctive painting style (Driri). However, the monastery was destroyed a second time in the 1960s during the Cultural Revolution, which caused much of its art to be lost or dispersed. After being rebuilt in the 1980s, the

monastery is once again active and influential. Over the centuries, the Drigung tradition also spread to other areas including parts of Ladakh, northwestern Nepal, western Tibet, and Kham, where it continues to flourish, as well as a new seat in northern India.

Art with Benefits: the Drigung Tradition will be on view through September 7, 2015. The exhibition is curated by Dr. David Jackson, Curator, and Dr. Karl Debreczeny, Senior Curator, Collections and Research.

About David Jackson

David Jackson is one of the foremost scholars of Tibetan Buddhist art with a PhD in Buddhist Studies, MA in the Tibetan language, and BA from the University of Washington (Seattle), Department of Asian Languages and Literature. Previous to his joining the Rubin Museum as a curator in 2007, Jackson was a professor at the Institute for the Culture and History of India and Tibet at Hamburg University; directeur d'études invité, École Pratiques des Hautes Études, Section des Sciences Religieuses, Sorbonne in Paris; instructor of the Bodh Gaya Buddhist Studies Program at Antioch University; and lecturer of Tibetan language for the Department of Indian and Buddhist Studies at Osaka University. He is the author of numerous publications on Tibetan art, including *A History of Tibetan Painting: The Great Painters and their Traditions* (1996), *Patron and Painter: Situ Panchen and the Revival of the Encampment Style* (2009), *The Nepalese Legacy in Tibetan Painting* (2010), *Mirror of the Buddha: Early Portraits from Tibet* (2011), *The Place of Provenance: Regional Styles in Tibetan Painting* (2012), and *Tibetan Thangka Painting: Methods and Materials* (1985).

About Karl Debreczeny

Dr. Debreczeny received masters degrees from Indiana University in both Art History and Tibetan Studies (1997) and earned a doctorate in Art History from the University of Chicago (2007). His research focuses on exchanges between Tibetan and Chinese artistic traditions and his publications include *The Black Hat Eccentric: Artistic Visions of the Tenth Karmapa* (2012). He has curated several exhibitions for the Rubin Museum of Art including, *Wutaishan: Pilgrimage to Five Peak Mountain*; *Patron and Painter: Situ Panchen and the Revival of the Encampment Style*; *Remember That You Will Die: Death Across Cultures*; and *Lama Patron Artist: The Great Situ Panchen* at the Smithsonian Freer-Sackler Gallery of Art, Washington DC. He joined the Rubin Museum in 2006.

About the Rubin Museum of Art

The Rubin Museum of Art is an arts oasis and cultural hub in New York City's vibrant Chelsea neighborhood that inspires visitors to make powerful connections between contemporary life and the art and ideas of the Himalayas, India, and neighboring regions. With a diverse array of thought-provoking exhibitions and programs—including films, concerts, and on-stage conversations—the Rubin provides immersive experiences that encourage personal discoveries and spark new ways of seeing the world. Emphasizing cross-cultural connections, the Rubin is a space to contemplate the big questions that extend across history and span human cultures.

The Rubin Museum's preeminent collection includes over 3,200 objects spanning more than 1,500 years to the present day. Included are works of art of great quality and depth from the Tibetan plateau, with examples from surrounding regions including Nepal, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and Mongolia.

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