

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

RUBIN MUSEUM TRACES SPREAD OF STYLISIC AND VISUAL ELEMENTS OF RELIGIOUS ICONOGRAPHY ACROSS ASIA OVER MORE THAN A MILLENIUM

MUSEUM'S HIMALAYAN FOCUS ADDS GEOGRAPHIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT TO WORKS FROM THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM'S EXTENSIVE COLLECTION

New York, NY, May 7, 2013 – Beginning May 31, the Rubin Museum of Art will present *From India East: Sculpture of Devotion from the Brooklyn Museum*, an exhibition tracing the stylistic evolution of Hindu and Buddhist sculptural artworks across Asia from the 2nd and 3rd centuries BCE through the 18th century CE. The exhibition will provide audiences with one of the most comprehensive comparative overviews of religious iconography in sculptural form, which was shaped by geographic location, time period, and cultural idioms as it spread from India to Sri Lanka, Tibet, Nepal, Burma (present-day Myanmar), Korea, Japan, and most Southeast Asian countries. The forty-eight works featured in *From India East* were selected from the Brooklyn Museum's extensive collection as the best examples of this iconographic diaspora. The Rubin's immersive environment, dedicated to the cultures and art of Himalayan Asia, will be the first to provide this context to the Brooklyn Museum's collection. The exhibition will be on view at the Rubin through July 28, 2014.

"*From India East* gives us an opportunity to show classical masterworks from another perspective," said Jan Van Alphen, Director of Exhibitions, Collections, and Research at the Rubin Museum. "The works from the Brooklyn Museum expand the context of our collection beyond Himalayan Asia, and by coming together in our focused space, the works themselves are able to tell stories that delve more deeply and broadly into the geography, culture, nationality, and artistic practices of places across Asia."

From India East includes religious sculptures in a range of mediums including terracotta, stone, bronze, and wood and will be organized in sections that trace the spread of Hinduism and Buddhism across regions. Examples of lineages that highlight how early works served as prototypes for myriad adaptations across national and cultural borders include:

- *Nagaraja*, a massive red sandstone sculpture from 1st - 2nd century BCE India depicting a semi-divine spirit, shares elements with the bodhisattva Padmapani, a later Buddhist bodhisattva figure from the 11th-12th century created in the region of Western Tibet or Kashmir; elements from this piece and others like it were exported to central, far eastern, and southeastern regions of Asia, and in these vastly different geographic regions "translated" into the local styles resulting in a bronze seated Bodhisattva Maitreya (Northern Zhou, China 6th century), a wooden standing bodhisattva (Jin Dynasty, China, 12th century), and a bronze standing Guanyin (Dali Kingdom, China, 12th century). Though differing in their final form, the *Nagaraja* can be seen as a precursor to all of them.
- An early standing Buddha from the Kushan Period, 2nd century India, evolved from the very first representations of the Buddha in the Mathura style, as exemplified by its close fitting, nearly

transparent monastic robe, and its protective (*abhaya mudra*) hand gesture. Similarly, a monumental bronze fragment of a seated Buddha from the 14th-century Sukhotai Period in Thailand is deeply related to earlier Indian models of the Buddha but with Thai facial traits.

- The oldest human representations in India, dating to the prehistoric Indus and Gangetic Valleys, were clay, female figurines that eventually served as precursors to fertility goddesses and were given the name *yakshi*. The postures and fertility attributes from the *yakshi* became the model for goddesses in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism and remain visible through centuries of iconography. ‘Maya giving birth to the Buddha’ from the 11th century in Bihar, India shows an example of how the Buddha’s mother is represented in the classical *yakshi* pose from the 1st-2nd century; the seated Tara from 15th-16th century Nepal shows how elements were translated into a new context in a new country.

The Brooklyn Museum’s Asian art collection comprises work from Japan, Korea, China, India, Southeast Asia, and the Himalayas dating as early as the 4th millennium, B.C.E. *From India East* will take place while the museum’s Asian art galleries are closed to the public for renovations.

FROM INDIA EAST – A TALK SERIES

Cultural, sculptural, and philosophical ideas traveled along trade routes from India east, north, and south. Tracing the spread of Buddhism, leading scholars and lecturers in the field stitch together the rich fabric of material and cultural exchange from 600 BCE on. These talks all include a curator-led tour of the galleries prior to the theater presentation.

Wednesdays at 7 p.m. \$15

Selected listing

- June 5 *The Multi-Cultural Roots of Buddhist Art in Ancient Gandhara*
Pia Brancaccio, Ph.D, Associate Professor of Art History, Drexel University
- June 19 *How the Buddha Became Chinese*
Susan Beningson, Ph.D, Assistant Curator of Asian Art, Brooklyn Museum
- June 26 *How the Buddha Came to Japan: Animation, Replication, and the Life of an Indian Image*
D. Max Moerman, Ph.D, Associate Director of the Donald Keene Center for Japanese Culture, Columbia University, and of the Columbia Center for Japanese Religions.
- July 10 *Shiva in Southeast Asia*
Michael de Havenon, an independent scholar specializing in sculpture produced in Southeast Asia before the ninth century.
- July 17 *Hindu Sculpture: The Many Faces of God*
Joan Cummins, Ph.D, Lisa and Bernard Selz Curator of Asian Art, Brooklyn Museum
- July 24 *The Korean Buddha*
Robert D. Mowry, Alan J. Dworsky Curator of Chinese Art and Head of the Department of Asian Art Emeritus, Harvard Art Museums

- July 31 *Why Paintings in Buddhist Caves?*
Eugene Wang, Ph.D, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Professor of Asian Art, Harvard University
- August 14 *The Sublime in Cambodia and Indonesia*
Helen Jessup, Ph.D, author of *Temples of Cambodia: The Heart of Angkor*, and *Art & Architecture of Cambodia*
- August 21 *Asian Images Inside Out: What can we learn from the contents of Buddhist statues?*
James Robson, Ph.D, Professor of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University
- August 28 *Buddhism in Tibet*
Katherine Anne Paul, Ph.D, Curator of the Arts of Asia, Newark Museum

ABOUT THE RUBIN MUSEUM:

The Rubin Museum of Art's immersive environment stimulates learning, promotes understanding, and inspires personal connections to the ideas, cultures, and art of Himalayan Asia. The only museum in the U.S. dedicated to the Himalayan region, the Rubin has welcomed more than one million visitors since its founding in 2004. Its outstanding collections of Tibetan, Chinese, Indian, Afghan, Bhutanese, Mongolian, Nepalese, and Pakistani art, which include photography, are complemented by a diverse array of films, on-stage conversations, concerts, and special events. The Museum's education, community, and access programming is dedicated to providing audiences of all ages and backgrounds with multidimensional experiences that foster dialogue and active engagement with the traditions and cultures of the Himalayas. The Rubin Museum's Café Serai and shop are also inspired by the region and serve as a natural extension of the gallery and programming experience.

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