

PRESS RELEASE

SHIVA AHMADI,
GENESIS BREYER P-ORRIDGE,
AND TSHERIN SHERPA
REINTERPRET TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES
ALONGSIDE THE TIBETAN BUDDHIST SHRINE ROOM

“SHRINE ROOM PROJECTS: SHIVA AHMADI /
GENESIS BREYER P-ORRIDGE / TSHERIN SHERPA”
OPENS OCTOBER 18



New York, NY, September 9, 2019 — The Rubin Museum of Art presents “Shrine Room Projects: Shiva Ahmadi / Genesis Breyer P-Orridge / Tsherin Sherpa,” three contemporary art installations in dialogue with the Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room. Located on the fourth floor of the Rubin, alongside the heart of the Museum — the Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room — “Shrine Room Projects” feature artists who reinterpret traditional and religious iconography and practices. The exhibition includes rotating video installations by **Shiva Ahmadi**; an interactive sculptural piece by **Genesis Breyer P-Orridge**; and newly acquired work by **Tsherin Sherpa**. “Shrine Room Projects: Shiva Ahmadi / Genesis Breyer P-Orridge / Tsherin Sherpa” will be on view October 18, 2019, through September 14, 2020.

Born on the eve of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Shiva Ahmadi draws on the personal experience of sociopolitical upheaval in her work. For “Shrine Room Projects,” Ahmadi presents two video works that touch on timely questions about vulnerability, dispossession, and corruption, echoing the Rubin Museum’s yearlong exploration of power in 2019. *Ascend* (2017) poetically reflects on the ongoing global refugee crisis, depicting the tragic, iconic image of Alan (Aylan) Kurdi’s body and the angel

Gabriel carrying him up to heaven. In contrast, *Lotus* (2014) features imagery of a serene, enlightened Buddha. Here the artist transforms the Buddha into a faceless oppressor, speaking to her ongoing concerns with the relationship between power and corruption. The videos will be presented in succession; *Ascend* will be on view from October 18, 2019, through April 6, 2020, and *Lotus* will be on view April 8, 2020, through September 14, 2020.

Returning to the Rubin is Genesis Breyer P-Orridge's *Touching of Hands* (2016), originally on view in the Rubin Museum's 2016 exhibition "Try to Altar Everything." Gifted by the artist to the Rubin Museum, this participatory piece recalls the wear of devotional touch and ritual usage seen in many of the historical bronze sculptures in the Museum's collection. The artist encourages visitors to touch this life-size bronze casting of h/er arm, causing the bronze to wear down over time and remind visitors of the life of the object. In its new context, Breyer P-Orridge's sculpture provides an experience for visitors to reflect on religious practices hinted at in the nearby Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room.

The Rubin proudly announces the recent acquisition of Tsherin Sherpa's *Wish-fulfilling Tree* (2016), which was exhibited in the preceding iteration of "Shrine Room Projects" and will remain on view. *Wish-fulfilling Tree* represents a poignant response to the earthquakes that struck the artist's home country of Nepal in 2015. This large-scale installation includes a seven-layer bronze mandala, an idealized representation of the universe, surrounded by rubble, debris, and found objects — all sourced from within five blocks of the Rubin Museum.

"We are honored to present two works in the Rubin Museum's permanent collection — Tsherin Sherpa's *Wish-fulfilling Tree* and Genesis Breyer P-Orridge's *Touching of Hands* — alongside video animations by Shiva Ahmadi," says **Beth Citron, Rubin Museum Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art**. "Each of these artists — through their unique voices — reinterprets traditional artistic languages, iconography, and practices in ways that are resonant with the Museum's scope and the Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room."

At the center of the exhibition, the Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room installation is inspired by Tibetan household shrines and comprises objects from the permanent collection. Filled with flickering butter lamps, the scent of incense, and the sounds of chanting, it conveys the feeling of a space used for offering, devotion, prayer, and contemplation. This richly detailed, immersive installation rotates every two years to highlight each of the four major Tibetan Buddhist religious traditions. This rendition features "Precept Transmissions," or the Kagyu tradition, and in addition to the images of buddhas and bodhisattvas, it includes representations of tantric deities, protectors, and teacher portraits specific to its transmission lineages.

Support

Shrine Room Projects: Shiva Ahmadi | Genesis Breyer P-Orridge | Tsherin Sherpa is supported by Ann and Matt Nimetz, Lois and Bob Baylis, and contributors to the 2019 Exhibitions Fund.

"Shrine Room Projects: Shiva Ahmadi | Genesis Breyer P-Orridge | Tsherin Sherpa" is organized by Beth Citron, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, and the Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room is curated by Elena Pakhoutova, Curator of Himalayan Art.

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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 onstage 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.

About Shiva Ahmadi

Shiva Ahmadi (b. 1975, Tehran, Iran) borrows from the artistic traditions of Iran and the Middle East to critically examine global political tensions and social concerns. Having come of age in the tumultuous years following the Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, Ahmadi moved to the United States in 1998 and has been based in California since 2015. Ahmadi works across a variety of media, including watercolor painting, sculpture, and video animation. The ornate patterns and vibrant colors drawn from Persian, Indian, and Middle Eastern art are consistent across her work. In her carefully illustrated worlds, formal beauty complicates global legacies of violence and oppression. On closer inspection, these playful fantasy realms are macabre theaters of politics and war: watercolor paint bloodies the canvas, and sinister global machinations play out in abstracted landscapes populated by faceless figures and dominated by oil refineries and labyrinthine pipelines. Ahmadi studied at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan; Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan; and Azad University, Tehran, Iran. She has held recent solo exhibitions at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (2018) and Asia Society Museum, New York (2014), and her work has been included in many group exhibitions globally. In 2016, Ahmadi was awarded the Anonymous Was a Woman Award and a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant. Skira published the monograph *Shiva Ahmadi* in 2017.

About Genesis Breyer P-Orridge

The cultural engineer Genesis Breyer P-Orridge (b. 1950, Manchester, England) is an avant-garde anti-hero whose remarkable body of work reminds us that when you believe something, artistic integrity demands that you live by it too. Breyer P-Orridge is one of the most rigorous and relentless agents of the postwar Anglo-American vanguard, questioning the meaning and substance of identity in a peerless half-century program of willful reincarnation and shape-shifting. Embracing the body as not simply the vessel but the site of the avant-garde impulse, Breyer P-Orridge has reinvented and reintroduced h/erself again and again — as Fluxus pioneer, groundbreaking performance artist, inventor of industrial music, “wrecker of civilization,” essayist and theoretician, and, most recently, with her late wife Lady Jaye, as pandrogyné. Breyer P-Orridge's work has been the subject of numerous international exhibitions including “Try to Altar Everything” (2016) at the Rubin Museum of Art, a retrospective of Breyer P-Orridge's work focused on h/er decades-long engagement with Nepal, where s/he has occasionally lived and worked since 1990; “S/he is Her/e” at the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh (2013); and “Life Is a Cheap Suitcase” at Summerhall, Edinburgh (2014). S/he has also received

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recognition from such institutions as Tate Britain, which acquired h/er archives for its collection.

About Tsherin Sherpa

Tsherin Sherpa (b. 1968, Kathmandu, Nepal) currently works and resides in the United States. From the age of 12, he studied traditional Tibetan thangka painting with his father, Master Urgen Dorje, a renowned thangka artist from Ngyalam, Tibet. After studying computer science and Mandarin in Taiwan, he returned to Nepal where he collaborated with his father on several important projects, including thangka and monastery mural paintings. In 1998, Sherpa immigrated to California where he began to explore his own style — reimaging traditional tantric motifs, symbols, colors, and gestures placed in resolutely contemporary compositions. He has exhibited across the United States, Europe, and Asia, including in the 8th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Brisbane (2015); “Beyond the Mandala — Contemporary Art from Tibet,” Volte Gallery, Mumbai, in collaboration with Rossi & Rossi, London (2011); “Scorching Sun of Tibet,” Songzhuang Art Center, Beijing (2010); “Tradition Transformed: Tibetan Artists Respond,” Rubin Museum of Art, New York (2010); “Buddha in the Hood,” Red Mill Gallery, Johnson, Vermont (2010); “Sacred Images,” Alta Galleria, Berkeley, California (2007); “Contemporary Thangka,” Smith Andersen Editions, Palo Alto, California (2007); and in solo exhibitions at Rossi & Rossi, London (2012) and Hong Kong (2016). In addition to many private collections around the world, Sherpa’s work can be found in the public collections of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco; Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia; Rubin Museum of Art, New York; and Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

About Beth Citron

Beth Citron is the Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Rubin Museum of Art. Her exhibitions for the Rubin Museum have included “A Lost Future: Shezad Dawood / The Otolith Group / Matti Braun” (2018), “Chitra Ganesh” (2018), “Henri Cartier-Bresson: India in Full Frame” (2017), “Genesis Breyer P-Orridge: Try to Altar Everything” (2016), and the three-part exhibition series “Modernist Art from India” (2011–13). She completed a PhD in the History of Art at the University of Pennsylvania, and has taught in the Art History Department at New York University, from which she also earned a BA in Fine Arts.

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Image caption:

Shiva Ahmadi (b. 1975, Tehran, Iran); *Ascend*; 2017; single-channel animation; 6 min. 48 sec.; courtesy of the artist and Haines Gallery, San Francisco; photograph courtesy of the artist and Haines Gallery, San Francisco