

For Immediate Release

The Rubin Announces Projects and Exhibitions in 2026, Its Second Year as a Global Museum

***Gateway to Himalayan Art* continues its national tour, traveling to Eugene, Oregon and Pasadena, California**

***About a Living Culture*, a public art sculpture by IMAGINE (a.k.a. Sneha Shrestha), in Jackson Heights, Queens, gets extended through September 2026**

New York, NY, January 15 — The Rubin Museum is pleased to announce a series of anchor exhibitions, programs, and strategic initiatives for 2026, as the Rubin embarks on its second year as a global, decentralized institution.

Highlights in 2026 include the traveling exhibition ***Gateway to Himalayan Art*** opening at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art in Eugene, Oregon, and the USC Pacific Asia Museum in Pasadena, California. In New York, ***About a Living Culture***, the public art sculpture by Nepalese artist IMAGINE (a.k.a. Sneha Shrestha) in collaboration with the New York City Department of Transportation art program (NYC DOT Art), is extended through September.

With a focus on education, the Rubin continues to serve New York City grade-school students with the **Mandala Lab in Your Classroom** program, which uses Himalayan art, mindfulness techniques, and interdisciplinary and tactile learning to help students develop critical life skills. In higher education, the Rubin expands the **Project Himalayan Art** digital platform, featuring essays, videos, images, and audio, with new resources for faculty and students focused on thematic explorations. The resources in Project Himalayan Art lay the foundation for Columbia University's new and only Tibetan art-focused seminar course for the spring semester, developed by the Rubin.

As part of efforts to provide more opportunities for artists and scholars of Himalayan art, the Rubin opens its third cycle of **grants** this spring and will announce the winner of the 2026 **Rubin Museum Himalayan Art Prize** in the fall. Multimedia initiatives continue with the tenth issue of *Spiral* magazine and the sixth season of the **AWAKEN** podcast, both exploring the theme of wrath from the Buddhist perspective.

"As a global museum, the Rubin has expanded its offerings across the country and around the world to bring Himalayan art to more people in more places," says **Executive Director Jorrit Britschgi**. "In the last year we've inspired and supported students, scholars, artists, art enthusiasts, and the public in cities from Salt Lake City, Utah, to Dharamsala, India, amplifying our mission in new ways. Through in-person experiences in museums and

classrooms, and online offerings that educate and connect, we've cemented our decentralized operating model. I'm inspired by this work and what we accomplished in our first year and look forward to another ambitious year ahead."

EXHIBITIONS

Gateway to Himalayan Art

Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon

February 21–July 5, 2026

USC Pacific Asia Museum, University of Southern California, Pasadena, California

Fall 2026

This traveling exhibition for colleges, universities, and museums introduces the main forms, concepts, meanings, and traditions in Himalayan art with objects from the Rubin's collection. It is part of the Rubin's flagship educational initiative Project Himalayan Art, a resource that supports the inclusion of Tibetan, Himalayan, and Inner Asian art and cultures into undergraduate teaching on Asia as well as presents Himalayan art to the general public.

The exhibition's three areas of focus are Symbols and Meanings, Materials and Technologies, and Living Practices. Traditional scroll paintings (thangkas), sculptures in various media, and ritual items comprise the diverse range of objects on view. Among the featured installations are in-depth displays that explain the process of Nepalese lost-wax metal casting and the stages of Tibetan thangka painting. Multimedia features include videos of art making and religious and cultural practices, audio recordings of voices from Himalayan communities that highlight living traditions, and more, all available on the integrated digital platform that offers rich contextual material to dive deeper.

The exhibition is curated by Elena Pakhoutova, senior curator of Himalayan Art at the Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art. *Gateway to Himalayan Art* has been travelling nationally since 2023 with venues planned through 2030. The Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art is the seventh venue.

About a Living Culture

Public art sculpture by IMAGINE (a.k.a. Sneha Shrestha)

NYC DOT Art Community Commission in partnership with the Rubin

Diversity Plaza, Jackson Heights, Queens

Extended through September 2026

About a Living Culture by Nepalese artist IMAGINE (a.k.a. Sneha Shrestha) is a six-foot-tall installation in the shape of a golden arch, with cut-out steel renderings of the letter *Ka*, the first letter of the Nepali alphabet. It celebrates the artists' heritage and is inspired by the diverse Himalayan cultures of the surrounding Jackson Heights, Queens, neighborhood. The sculpture invites New Yorkers into a space of reflection and belonging as they travel through Diversity Plaza, a bustling social, cultural, commercial, and transit hub in one of New York City's most diverse and densely populated neighborhoods. IMAGINE, who is from Nepal and currently works in Boston and Kathmandu, creates sculptures, paintings, and public murals around the world that often incorporate her native language and blend the aesthetics of Sanskrit scriptures with graffiti art. Her distinctive style accentuates the Devanagari script—used to write languages such as Nepali, Sanskrit, and Hindi—creating meditative artworks that transform spaces.

Rubin Museum Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room

Brooklyn Museum

On view through 2031

The Rubin Museum Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room is on view in the Brooklyn Museum's Arts of Asia galleries as part of a six-year partnership between the two institutions. The Rubin Museum Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room evokes the aesthetics and atmosphere of a traditional Tibetan sacred space and offers visitors the opportunity to experience Tibetan religious art in its cultural context. More than 100 works of art and ritual objects from the Rubin's collection are presented as they would be in an elaborate private household shrine, where devotees make offerings, pray, contemplate, and perform rituals. The design of the Shrine Room showcases these objects in an immersive environment that incorporates elements of traditional Tibetan architecture and the color schemes of Tibetan homes.

EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES

Project Himalayan Art

Digital platform, traveling exhibition, and publication

Ongoing

Project Himalayan Art is the Rubin's flagship educational initiative for learning about Himalayan, Tibetan, and Inner Asian art and cultures. Launched in 2023, it comprises three parts—a publication, traveling exhibition, and digital platform—and is designed to support the inclusion of these subjects into undergraduate teachings on Asia. The project serves students, scholars, teachers, and art enthusiasts nationally and beyond, filling gaps in the learning space. In 2025, the Project Himalayan Art digital platform served over 70,000 individuals from over 50 countries around the world.

In partnership with Columbia University's Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, Rubin Museum Senior Curator Elena Pakhoutova is teaching a new seminar course this spring for graduate and advanced undergraduate students at Columbia University using the materials from Project Himalayan Art, including essays, videos, audio, and images, as well as objects from the Rubin Museum's collection. Developed by the Rubin, the course, titled Tibetan Art and Material Culture, is the only Tibetan art class taught at Columbia this semester.

In 2026, Project Himalayan Art continues to expand with new digital resources, including educational videos in collaboration with Smarthistory, an award-winning digital platform and the most-visited art history resource in the world, with a database of public art history information for all audiences. Each video highlights an object from the Rubin's preeminent collection of Himalayan art and features Rubin curators Karl Debreczeny and Elena Pakhoutova in dialogue with Smarthistory art historians Beth Harris and Steven Zucker. Videos provide an accessible and engaging online introduction to the art and cultures of the Tibetan, Himalayan, and Inner Asian regions for students, art enthusiasts, and learners across the globe.

Mandala Lab in Your Classroom

Ongoing in-classroom education program

Mandala Lab in Your Classroom is a free program available to all New York City schools that aims to cultivate emotional awareness and compassion in the classroom through Himalayan art and its insights. Lessons are taught by experienced Rubin teaching artists and intertwine art-making activities, engagement with objects from the Museum's collection of Himalayan

art, mindfulness techniques, and interdisciplinary and tactile learning to help students develop critical life skills. This program is grounded in ideas from the Rubin's Mandala Lab installation and principles of Social, Emotional, and Ethical (SEE) Learning®. In 2025 the Rubin conducted 86 lessons in the classroom, serving 520 individual students and 25 schools.

Family Programs

Ongoing

The Rubin presents family programs at venues throughout New York City that dive deeper into the art and cultures of Himalayan regions and integrate Social, Emotional, and Ethical (SEE) Learning® principles. For the Rubin's annual Losar celebration, the Museum is partnering with the Intrepid Museum for their KIDS WEEK festivities, and in March will host a program in celebration of Holi at Pier 57 in partnership with Culture Tree.

Cultural Preservation and Education in Bhutan

A Partnership with the Bhutan Foundation

Fall 2026

The Rubin Museum and the Bhutan Foundation, a nonprofit based in Washington, DC, launched a partnership in 2025 to promote cultural preservation and education in Bhutan, working closely with the Wangduechhoeling Palace, the birthplace of Bhutan's monarchy. After a decade-long restoration project led by the Bhutan Foundation, and a ceremonial launch by Her Majesty Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck in October 2024, the Palace fully opened as a museum and cultural center in 2025, focused on Bhutan's history, culture, religion, and craftsmanship. In this next phase, the Rubin is supporting expertise in the areas of content development, visitor experience, and collection management, collaborating with Palace staff and museum professionals in the wider region. The Rubin will cocreate in-person workshops and ideation sessions, uniting participants from Bhutan and the Rubin Museum for mutual learning and professional exchange.

SUPPORT OF ARTISTS AND SCHOLARS

Rubin Research and Art Projects Grants

Submission period: February 16–March 6, 2026

The annual Rubin grant programs support art and research initiatives that promote the rich cultural legacy and living traditions of Himalayan regions. In the 2025 award cycle, the Rubin selected 15 projects from 132 letters of inquiry, totaling in \$200K in support. In 2026 artists, scholars, and researchers are invited to submit letters of inquiry between February 16 and March 6 for consideration.

The Rubin Museum Himalayan Art Prize

October 2026

The Rubin Museum Himalayan Art Prize is an international award launched in 2024 and given annually to an artist or collective that has made a mark in creative and critically relevant dialogues between Himalayan art and contemporary life. The award consists of an unrestricted \$30,000 cash prize, the largest for contemporary artistic practices related to the greater Himalayan region. Rubin Museum jury members and an international committee of experts nominate and select artists in a closed selection process.

The Rubin Museum Distinguished Lecture in Himalayan Art at The Met With Gautama V. Vajracharya

September 15, 2026

The Rubin Museum Distinguished Lecture in Himalayan Art is an annual lecture at The Met that features recognized expert insights into the greater Himalayan region's art, cultures, and history, fostering deeper connections with these rich traditions. The lecture series is supported by the Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art and hosted at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The 2026 lecture is by Gautama V. Vajracharya.

MULTIMEDIA PROJECTS

***Spiral* magazine 2026**

Wrath issue

Print and online

Available January 23, 2026

Spiral is the Rubin's multimedia publication that sits at the intersection of art, science, and Himalayan cultures. It asks big questions about our shared human experience through interviews, essays, fiction, art, and more. For the tenth issue, launching January 23, 2026, *Spiral* magazine is centered around the theme of wrath. It explores wrath not as an emotion of rage or anger, but rather as an energy wielded with intention, skill, and compassion to offer protection or remove obstacles. Art, interviews, and articles from Buddhist practitioners, scholars of Buddhism and Hinduism, artists, activists, and more offer insights into the wisdom of wrath and its transformative power. In addition to the publication of the print magazine in January, new content will be released online throughout the year.

AWAKEN podcast

Season 6

Launching August 2026

AWAKEN is a podcast about the dynamic path to enlightenment and what it means to "wake up." Each season guests share personal stories about how they've experienced a shift in their awareness, and as a result, their perspective on life. Launched in 2021, AWAKEN has received over 550,000 downloads and features celebrated guests such as Alok Vaid-Menon, Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, Ocean Vuong, Sonya Renee Taylor, Chella Man, Sharon Salzberg, and many others.

Mindfulness Meditation Podcast

Ongoing

This weekly podcast is hosted by the Rubin Museum's Tashi Chodron and helps listeners practice the art of attention. Each episode is inspired by an artwork from the Museum's collection, led by a prominent meditation teacher, and framed around a monthly theme. The sessions are for beginners and skilled meditators alike and include an opening talk and a 20-minute guided meditation. Launched in 2015, the series has released over 500 episodes and was named one of five best podcasts for better mental health in 2022 by *The Guardian* and the best meditation podcast for creatives in 2021 by *Healthline*.

Support

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The publication, *Himalayan Art in 108 Objects*, is supported in part by the National Endowment of the Arts.

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Lead support for Project Himalayan Art is provided by the Ellen Bayard Weedon Foundation, Bob and Lois Baylis, Barbara Bowman, the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, Noah P. Dorsky, Fred Eychaner, Christopher J. Fussner, the Estate of Lisina M. Hoch, Matt and Ann Nimetz, The Randleigh Foundation Trust, Shelley and Donald Rubin, and Jesse Smith and Annice Kenan.

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The Mandala Lab initiative, which includes Mandala Lab Curriculum in the Classroom, Family Programs, and the traveling Mandala Lab, is made possible with Leadership support from The Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation Global.

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The Mandala Lab initiative is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council. This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Rubin Museum's public artwork *About a Living Culture* by artist IMAGINE (Sneha Shrestha) was commissioned in partnership with New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) Art Community Commissions. Community Commissions is a signature NYC DOT

Art initiative in which the agency collaborates with community-based organizations to commission artists to design and install temporary public art on NYC DOT infrastructure city wide.

The Rubin Museum’s programs are supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council; by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature; and generous contributions from the Rubin Board of Trustees, individual donors, institutional funders, and Friends of the Rubin.



About the Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art

The Rubin is a global museum dedicated to presenting Himalayan art and its insights. Founded in 2004, the Rubin serves people internationally through exhibitions, participatory experiences, a dynamic digital platform, and partnerships. Inspired and informed by Himalayan art, the Rubin invites people to contemplate the human experience and deepen connections with the world around them in order to expand awareness, enhance well-being, and cultivate compassion. The Rubin advances scholarship through a series of educational initiatives, grants, collection sharing, and the stewardship of a collection of nearly 4,000 Himalayan art objects spanning 1,500 years of history—providing unprecedented access and resources to scholars, artists, and students across the globe. rubinmuseum.org

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