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Museum of Himalayan Art

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art Announces 2026 Grant Recipients

Thirteen art and research projects receive nearly $195,000 to advance the study, preservation, and presentation of Himalayan art and cultures

From left to right from top: Tibet Film Festival (Kunsang Kelden); Peldon Tshering; Sonam Tshedzom Tingkhye; Tenzing Rigdol; YESHE; Shamir Amir Kansar, Shital Shakya, and Birat Raj Bajracharya; Karma Yeshey; Kunsang Namgyal-Lama; Sakya Research Center (Gawa, H. E. Asanga Rinpoche, M. Fermer, and L. Dondrub); Tibet Heritage Fund (Yutaka Hirako and Pimpim de Azevedo); Tsum Oral Literature Project (Staff); Jampa Choetso; Kyiga Wilberforce

New York, NY, October 14, 2026 — The Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art has awarded $194,680 to 13 art and research projects in its 2026 Rubin Grants cycle. The grants support artists and researchers working in the greater Himalayan region and internationally to preserve artistic traditions, create new work, and expand access to knowledge about Himalayan art and cultures.

Since 2024, the annual Rubin Grants program has supported 45 projects focused on the cultural heritage and living traditions of Himalayan regions. For its third award cycle, the

Rubin received 250 letters of inquiry and selected 13 projects, with grants ranging from $3,000 to $25,000. Tibetan art and culture are a significant focus of this year's grants, which will help bring the Tibet Film Festival to the United States for the first time; support new work by contemporary Tibetan artists across visual art, music, and performance; and fund research on 14th-century murals in Tibet. Other projects will document endangered Bhutanese appliqué thangka making and artistic elements at risk in the historic buildings of Leh, India; produce the first integrated study of some of Bhutan's oldest surviving Buddhist wall paintings; and document miniature illuminations in non-canonical literature, an overlooked genre of Himalayan art. These are among the diverse projects supported in this year's grant cycle.

"This year's grantees demonstrate the many ways artists and researchers are preserving, studying, and reimagining Himalayan art, with a particular focus on Tibetan art," **says Jorrit Britschgi, Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art Executive Director**. "By directly supporting artists and researchers, the Rubin helps sustain knowledge within communities while creating new opportunities for that knowledge to be shared, studied, and experienced around the world."

2026 Rubin x Art Projects Grantees

Tibet Film Festival 2026 **(Kunsang Kelden, Tibet Film Festival)**
The Tibet Film Festival has preserved and promoted Tibetan storytelling through film for over a decade. Through this project, the organization launches its first festival based in the United States and establishes a permanent bridge to New York City and Washington, DC. The festival screens Tibetan documentaries, features, and shorts alongside moderated Q&A sessions led by directors, producers, and scholars. This curated program aims to challenge existing narratives from the periphery and shift them to the center of global cinematic discourse.
Grant amount: $25,000

Creating and Documenting an Appliqué Thangka in Bhutan **(Peldon Tshering)**
Peldon Tshering plans to document her creation of an appliqué thangka of Avalokitesvara under master artist Lopen Wangchuk, one of Bhutan's last living practitioners of this vanishing textile tradition. Not only will each step be recorded through photograph or film, but the reasoning behind each choice will also be documented. The project aims to produce the first publicly accessible instructional manual and digital archive of Bhutanese appliqué thangka-making, safeguarding these endangered techniques while opening a craft traditionally closed to women to a new generation of female artists.
Grant amount: $10,000

Performance: Tibetan Identity **(Sonam Tshedzom Tingkhye)**
Through *Performance: Tibetan Identity*, Sonam Tshedzom Tingkhye blends durational installation with live performance, transforming the stage into an immersive space where audiences wander freely before witnessing Tingkhye's performance unfolding through movement and voice. Premiering in Seattle, the work seeks to untangle the adaptive nature of the Tibetan identity and searches for methods of preservation, fantasizing the recovery and healing of homeland.
Grant amount: $9,500

***Thus Have I Heard* (Tenzing Rigdol and Maddie Blonquist, Brigham Young University Museum of Art)**
This project supports Tenzing Rigdol in creating new works for Brigham Young University Museum of Art's exhibition, *Thus Have I Heard: Tenzing Rigdol*, opening in 2029. Rigdol's new paintings, sculptures, carved altars, and woven carpets rooted in Tibetan Buddhist art-making traditions unite sacred stories from Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, and Mormonism, encouraging visitors to examine their own values and practices to foster a deeper sense of empathy, understanding, and tolerance. The project invites BYU art students to train alongside Rigdol and extends interfaith dialogue through lectures, tours, and a scholarly catalog.
Grant amount: $25,000

***DUST / LHAMO ཐལ་བ་ལྷ་མོ།: A Live Performance in Eight Acts* (YESHE)**
YESHE's debut album, *Dust* (2025), draws on the life of her grandmother, who was imprisoned in Tibet for 10 years, while also reflecting broader histories of Tibetan displacement, silence, resistance, exile, and survival across generations. Inspired in part by Tibetan opera (*dö gar*)—a fusion of storytelling, music, movement, and ceremony—this project seeks to transform *Dust* into a live, site-responsive performance work. YESHE seeks to create intimacy with the audience through participation in an atmosphere shaped by voice, repetition, spatial tension, and emotional proximity.
Grant amount: $20,000

2026 Rubin x Research Projects Grantees

***Revitalizing the Sacred: Documenting Traditional Manuscript Writing in the Kathmandu Valley* (Birat Raj Bajracharya)**
Birat Raj Bajracharya documents the tradition of Newar manuscript creation in the Kathmandu Valley, working with practicing spiritual teachers in Patan, Kathmandu, and Bhaktapur. Drawing on canonical ritual texts and direct observation, the project produces the first comprehensive audiovisual record of manuscript creation as an integrated ritual-artistic practice. The research also yields a bilingual film series, an instructional manual, a scholarly article, and a community exhibition in Patan, safeguarding embodied knowledge threatened by broken apprenticeship lines and modeling a community-engaged approach to intangible heritage documentation.
Grant amount: $19,750

***Documenting and Investigating the Earliest Surviving Buddhist Wall Paintings in Bhutan* (Karma Yeshey)**
Karma Yeshey leads a multidisciplinary team documenting and investigating some of the oldest extant wall paintings in Bhutan, the cliff-face wall paintings above Taktsang Monastery (Tiger's Nest). By providing the first integrated art historical and scientific study of these paintings, the project aims to inform future conservation efforts and contribute to broader discussions of artistic transmission, pilgrimage landscapes, and Buddhist visual culture across the Himalayan regions. It will result in publicly accessible documentation including 2D and 3D photography and educational lectures at venues in Bhutan, Denmark, and the United Kingdom.
Grant amount: $22,500

***The Murals of Samphel Rinpoche Ling* (Kunsang Namgyal-Lama)**
Kunsang Namgyal-Lama documents and examines the 14th-century murals of Samphel Rinpoche Ling, a temple in central Tibet. She plans to identify the painted figures, record surviving inscriptions, and analyze the distinct Newar and Chinese stylistic traditions visible across the murals. Through this research, Namgyal-Lama endeavors to produce a manuscript that will shed light on the circulation of artists, artistic models, and visual traditions between Tibet, Nepal, and China at the turn of the 15th century.
Grant amount: $10,430

***The Tibetan Illuminated Masters Project (TIM): Documenting a Neglected Form of Himalayan Art* (Mathias Fermer, Sakya Research Centre)**
The Sakya Research Centre documents an overlooked genre of Himalayan art: miniature illuminations of primarily Buddhist deities and saintly teachers found in non-canonical literature. The team aims to create a representative archive accessible to researchers and practitioners through a searchable, open-access web application. This corpus of cataloged book illuminations aims to provide insight into how individual teachers are depicted iconographically and serve as a useful identification tool for these teachers.
Grant amount: $19,500

***Comprehensive Research and Documentation of the Architecture and Heritage of the Old Town of Leh, Ladakh* (Pimpim de Azevedo, Tibet Heritage Fund)**
Tibet Heritage Fund conducts an architectural and cultural survey of the historic old town of Leh in Ladakh, India. The project documents vernacular, religious, and monumental buildings alongside endangered artistic elements, such as wall paintings, wood and stone carvings, and clay features, which are disappearing amid rapid urbanization. This research aims to expand knowledge of Himalayan art and architecture by examining architecture not only as a form of cultural expression but also as the integration of diverse artistic practices within built environments.
Grant amount: $15,000

***Tsum Mani (Manthang) Wall Documentation Project* (Tanzin Gyalzen Lama, Tsum Oral Literature Project)**
The Tsum Oral Literature Project aims to gather oral and visual records of the mani walls of Nepal's remote Tsum Valley. These mani walls are threatened by increased tourism, a changing climate, and a paucity of living masters. The team plans to geolocate, photograph, and create 3D models of mani walls and stupas while recording oral histories on their construction, materials, and symbolism. The project intends to share this documentation with monasteries and community members to guide future restoration, train local preservationists, and revive interest in this vanishing stone-carving tradition.
Grant amount: $12,000

***Travel Grant for Research* (Jampa Choetso)**
Jampa Choetso is a PhD graduate in cultural studies from the Academy of Language and Culture at Hong Kong Baptist University and a native of Kham, Tibet. Her research examines how grassroots, or non-governmental, museums across the Tibetan Plateau shape contemporary Tibetan identity and artistic expression.
Grant amount: $3,000

***Travel Grant for Research* (Kyiga Wilberforce)**
Kyiga Wilberforce is a graduate of the Bartlett School of Architecture, where she was awarded the Bartlett Medal in each of her three years of study. Her research and design practice investigate the dialogue between rural and urban sites in the Himalayas and South Asia, examining how migration and return reshape building typologies and complicate ideas of being away and at home.
Grant amount: $3,000

Support

The Rubin Grant Program is supported by generous donations from the Museum's Board of Trustees and donors.

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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