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**THE
RUBIN**

**MUSEUM
OF
ART**

PRESS RELEASE

**“REIMAGINE: HIMALAYAN ART NOW,”
A MUSEUM-WIDE EXHIBITION
FEATURING 32 ARTISTS,
OPENS MARCH 15**

**Large-scale exhibition bridges past and present with contemporary artworks
presented in dialogue with objects from the Museum’s collection**



Reimagine: Himalayan Art Now

March 15–October 6, 2024

Curated by Michelle Bennett Simorella, Director of Curatorial Administration & Collections at the Rubin Museum of Art; Tsewang Lhamo, artist and founder of Yakpo Collective (New York); and Roshan Mishra, Director of the Taragaon Next (Kathmandu, Nepal).

Press preview: Thursday, March 14, 9:00 AM–11:00 AM

Public opening: Friday, March 15, 6:00 PM – 10:00 PM

Free opening weekend: March 15–17, 11:00 AM–5:00 PM

NEW YORK, NY, January 19, 2024 — The Rubin Museum of Art presents “Reimagine: Himalayan Art Now,” a Museum-wide group show of 32 contemporary artists from the Himalayas, Asia, and diaspora whose work is presented in dialogue with objects from the Rubin Museum’s collection. A highlight of the Rubin’s 20th-anniversary year, the exhibition features 23 new commissions as well as recent work across mediums — including painting, sculpture, sound, video, installation, and performance — that reimagine the forms, symbols, and narratives found within the living cultural heritage of Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, and other Himalayan regions. The artists, many of whom are exhibiting in the United States for the first time, explore the continuum of the cultures that shape their identities, merging past with

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present into one space, and posing questions about the potential for transformation today. The exhibition will be presented throughout the entire Museum and represents the Rubin's largest engagement thus far with contemporary artists. **"Reimagine: Himalayan Art Now" is on view from March 15 to October 6, 2024, and is curated by Michelle Bennett Simorella, Director of Curatorial Administration & Collections at the Rubin Museum of Art; Tsewang Lhamo, artist and founder of Yakpo Collective (New York); and Roshan Mishra, Director of the Taragaon Next (Kathmandu, Nepal).**

Interspersed throughout the Museum's six floors and set alongside objects from the Rubin's permanent collection are 50 artworks from a group of multigenerational, living artists working in Bhutan, Canada, China, England, France, India, Japan, Nepal, Switzerland, Taiwan, Tibet, and the United States. Connecting them are symbols and stories from Himalayan cultural heritage that the artists reimagine to express who they are and the important ideas that continue to shape them. Their works explore the complexity of cultural and gender identity; the effects of displacement, migration, and technology; and the question of what it means to belong, asking what cultural norms should be held onto and what should be swept away. In their evolving self-examination, the artists speak to an acceptance of fluidity as a means to move forward.

At the heart of the exhibition is a newly commissioned, large-scale, site-specific installation cascading down the Museum's circular staircase. The artist, **Asha Kama Wangdi**, a founding member of the Voluntary Artists Studio (**VAST**) Bhutan, is one of the most well-known contemporary artists in Bhutan. Created by repurposing hundreds of once brightly colored prayer flags from religious sites across the county, where they were littered throughout the landscape, Asha Kama Wangdi questions the wisdom of the practice of raising prayer flags for merit when they are having adverse effects on the environment. Sustainability concerns are also present in **Bidhata K C's** new interactive installation, *Out of Emptiness*, a prayer wheel created from discarded tin cans, a trend she witnessed in remote villages in Nepal. The work highlights the intricate connections between discarded objects and broader themes of daily life, culture, globalization, consumerism, and geographical borders, where emptiness takes on new spiritual significance.

Many artists in the exhibition explore the nature of human existence. **LuYang** examines the Buddhist concept of the self as their avatar walks through a 3D animation of the Wheel of Life. **Prithvi Shrestha's** paintings explore the rising effects of technology and the interconnectedness of all things, and artist **Roshan Pradhan** reimagines a "New World" where robots replace the male in the union of male and female energy, which according to traditional Hindu and Buddhist beliefs, creates a balanced existence. Gender equality and fluidity emerge as central concerns with artists Uma Bista and Tenzin Mingyur Paldron respectively. In their new video commission, *Power, Masculinity and Mindfulness*, **Tenzin Mingyur Paldron** explores the fluidity of gender, which they argue has been represented in images of Tibetan figures such as Manjushri, the bodhisattva of wisdom, and their own experience of coming out as transgender to their parents. In **Uma Bista's** photo series *Stay Home, Sisters*, the artist bravely explores societal restrictions surrounding menstrual taboos in Nepal and the lasting effects these cultural practices have on women.

Other artists in "Reimagine" reflect on their voluntary and involuntary diasporic experience, with commissions that invite reflection on the movement of people and objects and subsequent change of culture and identity. **IMAGINE (a.k.a. Sneha Shrestha's)** immersive, site-specific installation serves as both a devotional space and place of belonging,

incorporating personal ritual objects she brought with her from Nepal and Rubin Museum collection objects. The walls of her installation feature her repetitive pattern of Devanagari script that meshes Sanskrit scripture with graffiti aesthetics, which is also repeated in a window installation that greets visitors before they enter the Museum. Humor and the theme of belonging are present in **Tenzin Gyurme Dorjee's** paintings about separation and loneliness, while fantasy and play feature prominently in the sculptures by **Shushank Shrestha** that reimagine characters that are part of his cultural heritage.

Finally, memory and the preservation of culture are a main concern for many of the artists. As a third-generation member of the Tibetan diaspora, **Losel Yauch** employs paint, tapestry and sculpture to both evoke and reconstruct fragments of memory of Tibetan culture that have been lost through cultural erasure. In her new commission, *Procession Immemorial*, a riderless calvary of silk-clad horses emerges ghostlike from the woven depictions of her grandfather's memories and stories of escape. In his installation *The Protectors*, **Jupiter Pradhan** uses both a story from his childhood and the sculpture of the wrathful deity Mahakala to advocate for local cultural preservation, urging visitors to cherish and safeguard the country's heritage and unique identity.

Included with the exhibition are three durational performances by **Amrit Karki**, **YESHE**, and **Sonam Tsehzdom Tingkyhe** co-curated by Marina Abramovic Institute and the exhibition's curatorial team. The performances will take place September 5 to October 6 with further details to be announced. The performances were realized with the support of the Marina Abramović Institute (MAI) in partnership with the Rubin Museum of Art.

"Rather than exhibit the contemporary artworks in their own galleries, we're installing them alongside 48 objects from the Rubin collection as a way to create a dialogue between past and present in one space," remarked **Michelle Bennett Simorella**. "Their pairings create visual, thematic, and material connections that invite new ways of understanding Himalayan art as well as the stories, traditions, and beliefs that bind them."

"The essence of this show is exemplified by exhibition artist Tenzin Mingyur Paldron's video installation titled *Listen to Indigenous People*. While the western world learns the benefits of mindfulness, meditation, and the Buddhist notion of impermanence, it systemically erases the peoples whose ancestors brought this treasured knowledge across mountains and oceans into exile," says **Tsewang Lhamo**. "Rather than presenting commodities for consumption, this show demands visitors center the ethical questions that Himalayan artists are asking about power, responsibility, identity and return."

"The show invites visitors to become aware of, examine, and potentially reframe their own biases and assumptions about Himalayan cultures and narratives," says **Roshan Mishra**. "The exhibition showcases a compelling reimagined narrative by creating a dialogue with the existing Rubin collection during their 20th-anniversary year."

Following the close of the show on October 6, "Reimagine: Himalayan Art Now" will travel to [Wrightwood 659](#), made possible by Halsted A&A Foundation. Founded in 2018, Wrightwood 659 is a private, non-collecting institution. Located at 659 W. Wrightwood Avenue, in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood, it was envisioned as a new kind of arts space devoted to presenting exhibitions on architecture and socially engaged art, including issues facing the LGBTQ+ community, and Asian art and architecture.

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS

Amrit Bahadur Karki (b. 1990, Pokhara, Nepal; lives and works in Pokhara, Nepal)
Asha Kama Wangdi, VAST Bhutan (b.1958, Punakha, Bhutan; lives and works in Thimphu, Bhutan)
Bharat Rai (b. 1990, Bung, Nepal; lives and works in Kathmandu, Nepal)
Bidhata K C (b.1978, Lalitpur, Nepal; lives and works in Lalitpur, Nepal)
Charwei TSAI (b. 1980, Taipei, Taiwan; lives in Paris, France; works in Paris, France, and Taipei, Taiwan)
Chitra Ganesh (b. 1975, Brooklyn, NY; lives and works in Brooklyn, NY)
Jasmine Rajbhandari (b. 1980, Birgunj, Nepal; lives and works in Kathmandu, Nepal)
John Tsung (b. New York, NY; lives and works in Houston, TX)
Jupiter Pradhan (b. 1977, Kathmandu, Nepal; lives and works in Kathmandu, Nepal)
Kabi Raj Lama (b. 1989, Kavrepalanchok, Nepal; lives in Highland Park, NJ; works in Kathmandu, Nepal)
Kunsang Gyatso (b. 1988, Helambu, Nepal; lives and works in New York, NY)
Kunsang Kyirong
Losel Yauch (b. 1998, New York, New York; lives and works in New York, New York)
LuYang (b. 1984, Shanghai, China; lives and works in Tokyo, Japan)
Manish Lal Shrestha (b. 1977, Patan, Nepal; lives and works in Patan, Nepal)
Meena Kayastha (b. 1985, Bhaktapur, Nepal; lives and works in Bhaktapur, Nepal)
Monsal Pekar (b. 1964, Atro, Yushul, Tibet; lives and works in Chengdu, China)
Pema (“Tintin”) Tshering (b. 1985, Thimphu, Bhutan; lives and works in Thimphu, Bhutan)
Prithvi Shrestha (b. 1977, Lalitpur, Nepal; lives and works in Lalitpur, Nepal)
Roshan Pradhan (b. 1977, Bhojpur Bazar, Nepal; lives and works in Kathmandu, Nepal)
Salil Subedi (b. 1976, Terhathum, Nepal; lives and works in Kathmandu, Nepal)
Shraddha Shrestha (b. 1988, Lalitpur, Nepal; lives in Lalitpur, Nepal; works in Kathmandu, Nepal)
Shushank Shrestha (b. 1993, Kathmandu, Nepal; lives and works in Marion, MA)
IMAGINE (a.k.a. Sneha Shrestha) (b. 1987, Kathmandu, Nepal; lives in Boston, MA; works in Kathmandu, Nepal, and Boston, MA)
Sonam Dolma Brauen (b. 1953, Kongpo, Tibet; lives and works in Niederwald, Switzerland)
Sonam Tshedzom Tingkhye (b. 1997, Seattle, WA; lives in Seattle, WA; works in Seattle, WA, and Boston, MA)
Tenzin Gyurmey Dorjee (b. 1987, Himachal Pradesh, India; lives and works in Himachal Pradesh, India)
Tenzin Mingyur Paldron (b. 1984, New Delhi, India; lives and works in New York, NY)
Tsherin Sherpa (b. 1968, Kathmandu, Nepal; lives in San Francisco, CA, and Kathmandu, Nepal; works in Kathmandu, Nepal)
Uma Bista (b. 1990, Kathmandu, Nepal; lives and works in Kathmandu, Nepal)
Yangdzom Lama (b. 1997, London, England; lives and works in London, England)
YESHE (b. 1984, Baden, Switzerland; lives and works in New York, NY, and Zurich, Switzerland)

CREDITS

Reimagine: Himalayan Art Now is supported by Bob and Lois Baylis, Noah P. Dorsky, Jacques and Natasha Gelman Foundation, Dan Gimbel of NEPC, LLC, Agnes Gund, New York Life, Matt and Ann Nimetz, The Prospect Hill Foundation, Eileen Caulfield Schwab, and Taipei Cultural Center in New York.

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Fundraising for *Reimagine: Himalayan Art Now* is underway and the supporter list is in formation.



ABOUT THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

The Rubin Museum of Art in Chelsea, New York City, explores and celebrates Himalayan art, cultures, and ideas across history and into the present. With its globally renowned collection, centered largely around art from the Tibetan Plateau, the Rubin fosters understanding and appreciation of the art by interpreting and relating it to our shared human experience today. Inspired by the tenets of Buddhism, Hinduism, and indigenous religions, and aligned with ongoing research into learning, behavior, and the brain, the Rubin offers innovative exhibitions and programs that examine provocative ideas across the arts and explore the mind. Through this work, the Museum serves as a space for reflection and personal transformation, opening windows to inner worlds so visitors can better navigate outer ones. rubinmuseum.org

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Image credits

Meena Kayastha (b. 1977, Patan, Nepal); *Goddess Varahi*; 2023; traditional Nepali door, papier-mache, pliers, nails, coins, keys, jewelry, bell, discarded vehicle metal parts; courtesy of the artist

Shushank Shrestha (b. 1993, Kathmandu, Nepal); *Male Guardian Lion Dog* (one of a pair from *Two Guardian Lion Dogs*); 2023; ceramic, glaze lustre; courtesy of the artist

Roshan Pradhan (b. 1977, Bhojpur Bazar, Nepal); *New World*; 2021; acrylic on canvas; courtesy of Sangeeta Thapa, Founder Director Siddhartha Art Gallery, Kathmandu, Nepal

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