

PRESS RELEASE

THE RUBIN TO TRANSFORM TO A GLOBAL MUSEUM MODEL, CLOSING ITS NEW YORK BUILDING

The museum will close its building in fall 2024 and launch an ambitious global program designed to bring awareness and understanding of Himalayan art to more people by partnering with artists and communities around the world.

NEW YORK, NY, January 31, 2024 — Today the Rubin announces its evolution into a global museum, building on its existing local, national, and international initiatives by launching an innovative program of partnerships, grants, loans, traveling exhibitions, scholarship, and digital offerings.

Founded in 2004 by Donald and Shelley Rubin, the Rubin Museum of Art has engaged audiences in New York City in the exploration of Himalayan art, and the cultures and ideas inherent in it, across time and place. With a collection largely comprised of Buddhist works from the Tibetan Plateau, the museum fosters understanding and appreciation of the art from this region by sharing and illuminating the ability of Himalayan art to reveal insights into the human condition.

The Rubin has embraced constant reinvention throughout the last two decades, evolving from a private collection to a beloved public organization with cutting-edge programming. In that same spirit of renewal and to serve its mission well into the future, the Rubin will begin the next chapter of its history as a museum without walls and will close its New York City building on October 6, 2024.

Led by the board of trustees, the Rubin examined how to best use its collection, knowledge, creativity, relationships, and financial resources for the long term. The museum's leadership reached the difficult decision to sell its building on 17th Street after an in-depth analysis of the cultural sector and its position in it, the needs of international audiences, and the opportunity to execute its mission with a global outlook and impact.

With this transformation, the Rubin will take a leadership role in redefining what it means to be a museum in the 21st century. In this new model, the Rubin will pursue an ambitious program that will expand its efforts to promote cultural understanding, inspire intellectual discovery, and deepen awareness of self and others, with the central goal of creating a more compassionate, resilient world. *See 'The Rubin's Global Future' below for details on future objectives and programming.*

The Rubin will continue to care for, study, and share its collection as the foundation of the organization, through an expansive loan program as well as traveling exhibitions conceived by the Rubin, and in partnership with other cultural organizations.

The museum building on 17th Street will remain open to the public until October 6. In addition to highlights from the permanent collection, the Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room, and the New York installation of the Mandala Lab, visitors can experience the anniversary exhibition, *Reimagine: Himalayan Art Now* (March 15 - October 6, 2024), installed across the entire Museum. The group show features new and recent artworks from 32 contemporary artists from Nepal, Tibet, and Bhutan, as well as select international artists inspired by Himalayan art, presented in dialogue with objects from the Museum's collection.

In recent years, the Rubin has pursued a series of projects that piloted new ways of fulfilling its role as a global museum. These include:

- **Venice Biennale 2022:** Provided lead global support for the first [national pavilion of Nepal](#), co-commissioned by the Nepal Academy of Fine Arts and the Siddhartha Arts Foundation.
- **Mandala Lab:** Designed to promote emotional learning through Buddhist principles and interactive experiences, the Mandala Lab traveled to Bilbao in 2022 as a highlight of the Wellbeing Summit for Social Change, and London in 2023 as a Special Project of the London Design Festival, with additional venues scheduled through 2025.
- **Project Himalayan Art:** The most comprehensive interdisciplinary resource for the study of Himalayan, Tibetan, and Inner Asian art and cultures, Project Himalayan Art comprises a digital platform, scholarly publication, and an ongoing traveling exhibition of objects from the Rubin's collection for colleges and universities, most recently presented at Lehigh University Art Galleries and the McMullen Museum of Art at Boston College and opening at the Harn Museum of Art at the University of Florida on February 13.
- **Itumbaha Museum:** The Rubin supported a local Nepalese community's longstanding vision for the creation of the Itumbaha Museum in Kathmandu, following the return of an object from the Rubin's collection to the Itumbaha monastery.
- **Digital Content:** The museum has expanded its digital investments and initiatives, such as its Webby Honoree podcast [AWAKEN](#), with listenership in over 150 countries.

Shelley Frost Rubin, Co-Founder, said: "Building and sharing this collection of Himalayan art was one of my family's great joys. Creating a museum was a life-changing moment. While it has been a privilege to welcome visitors to the Rubin in New York over the last 20 years, our anniversary inspired reflection on how we can achieve the greatest possible impact well into the future. The result is the firm belief that a more expansive model will allow us to best serve our mission – not changing 'why' we share Himalayan art with the world, but 'how' we do it. Bold change has always been in the Rubin's DNA, and we are excited to embrace what our future as a global museum has to offer."

Noah Dorsky, Board President, said: "The definition of what a museum is has evolved dramatically in recent years – questions of its role in culture and society at large, its recognition of the changing needs of the communities it serves, its value to cultural consumers, to name a few. Historically, the Rubin's culture embraces continual change and evolution, and in our new incarnation, we are redefining what a museum can be. Realigning our resources will empower us to reach much broader and diverse audiences, prioritize

accessibility, galvanize creativity, advance scholarship, and champion new modes of engagement in a fast-changing world.”

Jorrit Britschgi, Executive Director, said: “By sharing Himalayan art and its insights, the Rubin aims to empower people to examine big questions of what it means to be human today, with the hope of creating a more compassionate, resilient world. In times of rapid change, the Rubin’s new model seeks to share this art and cultural heritage, much of which represents practices that are said to increase tolerance for instability and change. For our future programming – both in-person and digital – we seek to partner with communities worldwide to explore how Himalayan art can serve their needs to learn, contemplate, and connect.”

THE RUBIN’S GLOBAL FUTURE

Going forward, the Rubin will prioritize several key objectives in service of its mission, including:

- Strengthening the representation of Himalayan art in museums and relevant cultural organizations, including long-term loans from the Rubin collection;
- Nurturing and broadening the creative exploration and interpretation of traditional Himalayan art, including supporting and elevating contemporary artists inspired by the art and cultural heritage of this region;
- Expanding research into Himalayan art, and the Rubin’s collection in particular, with an emphasis on interpretation and accessibility;
- Deepening provenance research and fostering dialogue with source countries to further awareness on the topic;
- Investing in multimedia educational resources, providing broader access to the collection.

COLLECTION

The preservation, study, interpretation and sharing of the collection will continue to be a primary function of the Rubin going forward. To that end, today the Rubin announces the launch of a robust long-term loan program with museums and cultural organizations that are interested in expanding their permanent presentation of Himalayan art and sharing it with their respective communities.

An extensive and proactive loan program will enable the Rubin’s permanent collection to be experienced by more people around the world. The Rubin will continue to share its scholarly, curatorial, and interpretive expertise and resources when loaning objects, accelerate its provenance research, and make its objects and their histories more accessible digitally.

PROGRAMMING

The Rubin will continue to originate its own exhibitions, installations, signature programs, and content series, as well as contribute to special exhibitions and experiences that build

awareness of Himalayan art and cultures in collaboration with other institutions, serving the public locally, nationally and internationally.

Upcoming projects include:

- The traveling version of its interactive [Mandala Lab](#) will be installed in Milan, Italy in Spring 2024 and another European city in 2025.
- The [Gateway to Himalayan Art](#) exhibition – a cornerstone of Project Himalayan Art – will travel to universities in Florida, Ohio, Utah, Oregon and California through 2026.
- The Rubin exhibition [Reimagine: Himalayan Art Now](#) will travel to Wrightwood 659 in Chicago in the fall of 2024.
- Highly successful digital programs, such as [Mindfulness Meditation](#) and [AWAKEN](#) podcasts, will continue to be produced, as well as new multi-media experiences about contemporary art and artists.
- The Rubin's Social, Emotional, and Ethical Learning® curriculum, incorporated in partnership with Emory University, will serve schools and teachers in New York City and beyond through digital and in-person traveling Mandala Lab experiences, and will be expanded in the coming years.

SUPPORT AND FUNDING

As a global museum, the Rubin will serve as a platform and hub for thinkers, practitioners, and artists from the Himalayan region, diaspora, and beyond, shaping understanding of Himalayan art, its insights, and cultural contexts today.

The Rubin will offer expanded resources for the research, interpretation, and presentation of Himalayan art through significant funding opportunities for external organizations, scholars, and artists:

- [Applications for the new Rubin Grant Program open in March](#). The Grant Program supports individual and institutional projects focusing on researching, interpreting, sharing, and responding to Himalayan art.
- In November 2023, the Rubin announced [the creation of the Rubin Museum Himalayan Art Prize](#), with the inaugural prize to be awarded in fall 2024. As a key funding opportunity, the prize will support living artists and recognizes the work of innovative individuals and collectives that have majorly contributed to creative and critically relevant dialogues between Himalayan art and contemporary life.

The Rubin continues to rely and build on the generous support of individual and institutional donors who share its vision of a global museum that strives to create broader awareness around Himalayan art by serving people locally, nationally, and internationally.

ABOUT THE RUBIN

The Rubin is a global museum dedicated to sharing Himalayan art with the world. Founded in 2004, the Rubin serves people across the globe through a dynamic digital platform and

participatory experiences, exhibitions, 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 wellbeing, and create a more compassionate world. The Rubin advances scholarship through a series of educational initiatives, grants, long-term loans, 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 around the world.

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