

PRESS RELEASE

THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS
PROJECT HIMALAYAN ART,
ADVANCING AN UNDERREPRESENTED FIELDNEW DIGITAL PLATFORM FOR LEARNING ABOUT
HIMALAYAN ART IS LIVE

TRAVELING EXHIBITION OPENS AT LEHIGH UNIVERSITY

Project Himalayan Art is a three-part initiative that fills a gap in the learning space by providing global access to and a broader understanding of Himalayan art with an expansive digital platform, traveling exhibition, and publication. The project highlights cross-cultural exchange centered on Tibetan Buddhist art and cultures.

NEW YORK, NY, February 14, 2023—**Project Himalayan Art**, the Rubin Museum’s largest institutional project to date that supports the advancement of an underrepresented field, **is now live**. The new digital platform, a hub for the study of Himalayan art, is accessible at rubinmuseum.org/projecthimalayanart and the introductory traveling exhibition, *Gateway to Himalayan Art*, has opened at its first venue, Lehigh University Art Galleries. The third integrated component of the project, the cross-disciplinary publication *Himalayan Art in 108 Objects*, is available to pre-order before its release on June 13.

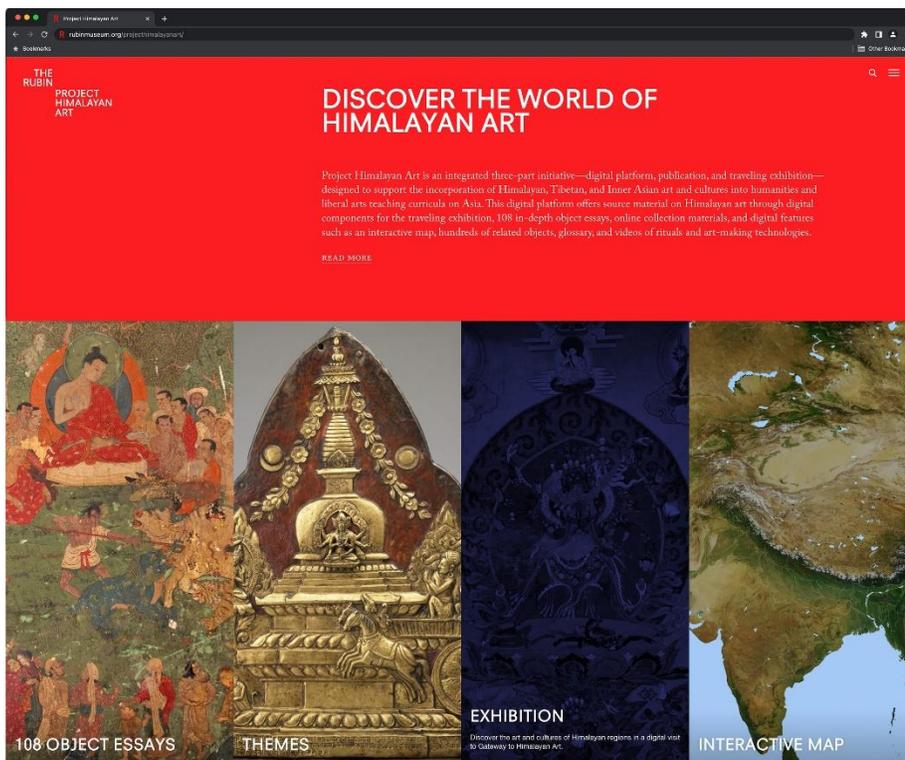
“We are honored to present Project Himalayan Art to students, teachers, researchers, and anyone interested in Himalayan art and cultures, as well as those who seek to deepen their understanding of Asian art and cultures more broadly,” says **Rubin Museum Executive Director Jorrit Britschgi**. “This project has been over three years in the making and is a capstone in our efforts to expand awareness and appreciation of Himalayan art and cultures on a global level.”

Project Himalayan Art is the first project of its kind to offer comprehensive, introductory resources for learning about Himalayan art, with a focus on the cross-cultural exchange of Tibetan, Himalayan, and Inner Asian art and cultures. Its integrated components—the **digital platform, traveling exhibition, and publication**—are designed to support the inclusion of Himalayan art into humanities and liberal arts curricula on Asia in higher education.

Despite its historical significance and impact in shaping cultural and artistic achievements in Asia, art from Tibetan, Nepalese, Bhutanese, Mongolian, and surrounding regions is often presented in isolation as a limited regional form, unconnected to other parts of Asia. It has

been excluded from long-established introductory surveys of the visual arts and cultures of Asia, due in large part to the lack of introductory resources for teaching.

“Himalayan art bridges and traverses the regional spaces defined by the somewhat arbitrary academic divisions, such as East Asia or South Asia,” said **Rubin Museum curators Elena Pakhoutova and Karl Debreczeny**. “It visually expresses the Buddhist, Hindu, and Bon religious cultures, as well as indigenous beliefs from the greater Himalayan mountain region, the Tibetan Plateau, and beyond, reflecting uninterrupted cross-cultural exchange. What binds this complex web of connections is Buddhism and the legacy of Tibetan Buddhists as agents of cultural production in which religious masters, ordinary people, and artists and their works, forms, and methods traveled and transformed different areas. Our hope is that this project and its resources not only inspire a next generation of scholars that can expand the field of Himalayan art, but that Tibetan, Himalayan, and Inner Asian arts and cultures become incorporated in presentations of broader Asia.”



The new Project Himalayan Art website, designed by CHIPS studio, is a hub to discover the world of Himalayan art. It combines materials from the [traveling exhibition](#)— texts, images, videos of rituals and art-making technologies, and audio of voices from the Tibetan, Himalayan, and Inner Asian communities—and the [108 object essays](#) and images from the publication, *Himalayan Art in 108 Objects*, with additional visual and multimedia content. This includes 360-degree object views, an [interactive map](#) with geographic and time-based narratives, a [glossary](#) of hundreds of definitions with audio pronunciations for terms essential for learning about Himalayan art and cultures, over 1,000 object images, overviews of common [themes that connect content across the site](#), a selected [bibliography](#) of central texts for further study, and [teaching resources](#) for faculty with suggested disciplines and class units.

“Our goal with the Project Himalayan Art website was to create a welcoming and highly contextualized experience for a wide range of users, from academia to individual learners around the world,” said **Rubin Museum Head of Digital Content and Strategy Kimon Keramidas**. “When developing this ambitious project, we went out of our way to carefully curate, design, link together, and contextualize an enormous amount of material, both, within the platform and externally. You will find hundreds of links to dozens of existing relevant sites in the field, including academic journals, other online collections at institutions worldwide, and resources such as the Buddhist Digital Archive and Asian Historical Architecture.”

The publication, *Himalayan Art in 108 Objects*, features 108 essays from 72 international scholars and explores sites and objects in-situ, holdings from international institutions, architectural monuments, as well as objects from the Rubin Museum’s collection, dating from Neolithic to contemporary times. They illuminate the exchange and movement of objects, people, ideas, traditions, and styles to and from Tibetan regions, contextualizing Himalayan art within historical developments in religious, social, literary, and material culture, demonstrating that these connected traditions played a significant role in Asia.

The traveling exhibition, *Gateway to Himalayan Art*, is offered free to universities and opened on January 31 at its first venue, Lehigh University Art Galleries. It is conceptually modeled after the introductory exhibition at the Rubin Museum and features forty to eighty objects from the Rubin Museum’s collection, depending on the venue size. It acquaints visitors with the fundamental visual language and meanings of Himalayan art, the materials and techniques used, and the purposes for the objects’ creation, often in the context of religious practices or special occasions marking life events, but also as part of everyday secular aims like good health and a long life. It gives students an opportunity to experience objects in person and to learn in a new way. Visitors can deepen their experience using QR codes that lead to multimedia on the digital platform, providing diverse pathways for discovery and focused engagement with the material.

“Lehigh University Art Galleries is honored to be the first venue for the *Gateway to Himalayan Art* exhibition,” said **William Crow, Director of Lehigh University Art Galleries and Professor of Practice in the Department of Art, Architecture, and Design**. “We are excited by the wide range of learning opportunities Project Himalayan Art affords, including drop-in community workshops, scholarly symposia, and student-led research. Our collaboration with the Rubin is precisely the type of project that can power interdisciplinary investigation and global studies in higher education. These exceptional artworks, as well as the accompanying print and online resources, allow us to bolster our knowledge of the arts and cultures of Inner Asia and make even deeper connections across multiple disciplines at the university and in our community.”

Together, the digital platform, exhibition, and publication will provide multiple entry points for students, educators, and the public to learn about the art from the cultural regions centered around the Tibetan Plateau and gain a holistic understanding of Asia.

The project is led by **Elena Pakhoutova** and **Karl Debreczeny**, senior curators at the Rubin Museum, in collaboration with the Rubin Museum’s Humanities Advisory Group, comprising Kerry Lucinda Brown, Isabelle Charleux, Wen-shing Chou, Rob Linrothe, Christian Luczanits, Ariana Maki, Annabella Pitkin, Andrew Quintman, and Gray Tuttle. The exhibition was further developed with the help of the Exhibition Advisory Group, which included Benjamin Bogin,

Sienna Craig, and Brenton Sullivan. Project Himalayan Art was conceived and informed by a survey sent to 250 Asian-studies faculty in 2019 and developed over the last three years.

SCHEDULE FOR GATEWAY TO HIMALAYAN ART

- Lehigh University Art Galleries, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA, January 31–May 26, 2023
- McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, Boston, MA, fall 2023
- Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art at the University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, spring 2024
- The Frank Museum of Art, Otterbein University, Westerville, OH, fall 2024
- Utah Museum of Fine Arts, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT, spring 2025
- Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, spring 2026
- USC Pacific Asia Museum, University of Southern California, Pasadena, CA, fall 2026

ABOUT CHIPS

CHIPS is the Brooklyn-based design and development partnership of Teddy Blanks, Dan Shields, and Adam Squires. Founded in 2009, their work with arts and cultural partners spans websites and interactive installations, visual identity, and design for moving and printed media. Recent notable projects include a website for the Calder Foundation, an in-gallery interactive for the exhibition *Frédéric Bruly Bouabré: World Unbound* at the Museum of Modern Art, and typography for the Apple TV+ series *Severance*, which won the Emmy Award for Outstanding Main Title Design.

SUPPORT

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Dr. Bibhakar Sunder Shakya, to honor the memory and legacy of Professor Dina Bangdel, art historian, curator, cultural activist, and educator from Nepal.

Samphe and Tenzin Lhalungpa, to honor the memory and works of L.P. Lhalungpa, Tibetan scholar, broadcaster, and educator.

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Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this initiative, do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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

MEDIA CONTACT

Sandrine Milet | Senior Manager, Communications & Marketing | 212-620-5000 x228
press@rubinmuseum.org