

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **REVITALIZED SEATTLE ASIAN ART MUSEUM REOPENS TO THE PUBLIC WITH A TWO-DAY CELEBRATION, FEBRUARY 8 AND 9, 2020**

Designed by LMN Architects, the renovated and expanded museum features new spaces for art, education, and conservation and a sweeping reinstatement of the Seattle Art Museum's major Asian art collection

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SEATTLE, WA - The reimaged and reinstalled Seattle Asian Art Museum will reopen to the public with a weekend celebration on February 8 and 9, 2020, inaugurating a new era for one of the few museums in North America dedicated exclusively to Asian art. With an historic 1933 Art Deco building that has been enhanced by the Seattle-based firm LMN Architects, the museum now features a completely new thematic presentation of the Seattle Art Museum's major collection of Asian art, in an unparalleled visitor-centered installation that makes connections across geography and embraces the complexity of its vast and profound subject. Other features include a large new gallery for special exhibitions, a dedicated education space to serve thousands of students a year, and an important conservation center for Asian paintings.

The museum will begin welcoming the public with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 8 am on Saturday, February 8. In evidence of public excitement for the reopening, all 10,000 free tickets have been claimed for the weekend-long celebration. The museum's regular hours will begin on February 12, including four new free days offered every month.

"We could not be more excited to open the doors of the museum and welcome everyone back," said Amada Cruz, Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO of the Seattle Art Museum (SAM). "The new and refreshed galleries will display art from the collection that has never been on view before, and the resonant themes of the installation will provoke both delight and curiosity. The new connections to and views of Volunteer Park are stunning. We are grateful to the city of Seattle and the staff and supporters of SAM, as well as SAM's retired director, Kimerly Rorschach, whose extraordinary dedication brought this project to fruition."

"The long-awaited reopening of the museum will also see a deepening of an ongoing shift in our collecting," continued Cruz. "SAM will continue a significant recent focus on acquisitions of historic, modern, and contemporary Asian



Pacific Islander and Southeast Asian art. We are also hoping to acquire work by API artists living and working in the Seattle area.”

Within the last year, ten works of art have been acquired or are promised from SAM patrons for the museum’s Asian art collection. One will be on view in the reopened museum; *Reduction* (2015), a porcelain statue of a seated figure by Takahiro Kondo, will debut later in February atop the restored original fountain in the Fuller Garden Court. Works acquired or promised within the last five years are on view in the inaugural installations, including *Flower Ball* by Takashi Murakami and *Bewitched #2, Seoul* by Jung Yeondoo.

#### A REIMAGINED COLLECTION AND VISION FOR ASIAN ART

The building project enables the Asian Art Museum to dedicate the galleries of its 1933 building to an expanded installation of the outstanding permanent collection of art from China, Korea, Japan, India, the Himalayas, Southeast Asia, and more. A 2,650-square-foot gallery in the new construction on the building’s east side provides expanded space for special exhibitions.

With the expanded and improved space has come the opportunity to bring to light new stories of the Asian art collection amid changing definitions of Asia in the 21st century. FOONG Ping, Foster Foundation Curator of Chinese Art; Xiaojin Wu, Curator of Japanese and Korean Art; and Darielle Mason, consulting curator of South Asian art, collaborated on a dramatic reimagining of the collection in the inaugural installation, *Boundless: Stories of Asian Art*.

“This was such a rare opportunity for us as curators,” says Foong. “We started from scratch, exploring new ways of envisioning Asia’s art forms in our galleries that wasn’t just according to present-day definitions of nations. The project also generated new research of our collection, which will have a deep impact on the museum.”

Adds Wu, “It’s so exciting to see these works—whether well-known or unfamiliar to visitors—in a completely new light. Over the last three years, as we carefully put together the objects and themes, we always kept the visitor in mind, looking for ways to ignite questions and spark wonder.”

Organized thematically, *Boundless* presents stories across 13 galleries about spiritual traditions, the physical body, sacred sites and texts, festivals and celebrations, precious materials, the afterlife, the natural world, visual arts and literature, color and ceramics, and clothing and identity. The presentation makes use of the building’s structure—two wings divided by a central courtyard—with art related to material life located in the north galleries and spiritual life located in the south galleries.



SAM inaugurates the special exhibition galleries on the east side of the building with *Be/longing: Contemporary Asian Art*, featuring 12 artists from across Asia—including Azerbaijan, Iran, India, Thailand, China, Korea, and Japan—who have worked or are working outside Asia. Featuring works from SAM’s holdings and loans from private collections, the exhibition explores the artists’ experiences as

both insiders and outsiders and their simultaneously Asian and international perspectives.



The Fuller Garden Court, the museum's central gathering space, features a light installation designed for the reopening by New York-based, Seattle-born artist Kenzan Tsutakawa-Chinn. Recalling traditional Japanese textile forms, *Gather* is a LED-light canopy that connects visually to the beloved sculpture *Black Sun* by Isamu Noguchi outside the museum's Art Deco front entrance.

With the expansion, the museum is poised to open the Asian Paintings Conservation Center, the first of its kind in the western United States. Led by Nicholas Dorman, SAM's Chief Conservator, the center is devoted to the conservation, mounting, and study of Asian paintings, serving SAM's collection as well as institutional and private collections in the region. To underscore the importance of conservation for the understanding and appreciation of Asian art, visitors will be able to observe the center's work through a viewing window and displays featuring conservation projects and processes. A \$3.5 million challenge grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation established and endowed the center.

#### WHERE THE COMMUNITY LEARNS AND EXPLORES

The renovated and expanded museum features an innovative community learning gallery, which brings art from the collection alongside art-making and reflection stations that invite community voices and creativity into the space. A new dedicated space for SAM's extensive education and art-making activities will serve K-12 students throughout the region. A new meeting room is available to community partners of SAM via reservation.



The museum will feature interpretive technology integrated throughout the galleries and educational spaces. Interactive experiences, smartphone-enabled multimedia tours, and in-gallery video content all offer ways for visitors to learn about the art on view and the ideas the works embody.

The project furthers the work of SAM's Education and Public Engagement department, which serves the community across the museum's three locations, with public programs; programs for youth, teens, and families; and programs for schools and educators. At the Asian Art Museum, the Gardner Center for Asian Art and Ideas presents performances, films, and lectures with artists and scholars. Programs for youth and families include Free First Saturdays and the annual SAM Camp. SAM reaches more than 35,000 youth every year with tours and programs for K-12 students and the Creative Advantage program, a partnership with the Office of Arts & Culture to make quality arts education accessible to every student in the Seattle Public Schools. In addition, *The Future Ancient*, a series of free programs managed by the Office of Arts & Culture, will

be presented in and around the museum through the City of Seattle's 1% for Art program. The Asian Art Museum also houses the McCaw Foundation Library.

### A MODERN MUSEUM WITHIN AN HISTORIC ICON

The Asian Art Museum's historic Art Deco building was SAM's original home and has not been substantially restored or renovated since its construction in 1933. The renovation and expansion project has modernized and preserved the historic building, expanded exhibition and education space, and established a better connection to the surrounding Volunteer Park.

Highlights include:

- A new 1,247-square-foot glass-enclosed park lobby on the east side of the building, creating a visual connection to Volunteer Park
- Two new portals in the Fuller Garden Court opening onto the park lobby
- A new 2,650-square-foot gallery, education studio, conservation center, and community meeting room
- The restoration of Olmsted-designed pathways in the park near the museum
- Restoration of three original fountains (two exterior, one interior)
- Cleaning of the original sandstone façade
- Cleaning of the façade's Art Deco metalwork and reglazing of the glass



"To work on a historic building like this is a real privilege and honor," said Sam Miller, Partner-in-Charge at LMN Architects. "Working with SAM was a great fit, because our focus is also about creating great social experiences and connecting to community. We hope the addition adds significance to the original historic building, and we are very excited for everyone to visit the museum and experience the renovation and addition for themselves."

Adds Wendy Pautz, Design Partner at LMN Architects, "Our design brings the Art Deco structure back to its origins, but enhanced with new surprises and the three-story addition. The new modern gallery and park lobby are built around the trees so that now, everyone in the park can get a sense of what is happening within, and the contemporary addition creates new opportunities for serendipitous social interactions inside the museum."

### HOURS AND TICKETS

Monday and Tuesday: closed  
 Wednesday: 10 am–5 pm  
 Thursday: 10 am–9 pm  
 Friday: 10 am–5 pm  
 Saturday: 9 am–5 pm  
 Sunday: 10 am–5 pm

Adults: \$14.99  
 Seniors (65+): \$12.99  
 Military (With ID): \$12.99  
 Students (With ID): \$9.99  
 Teens (15–18): \$9.99

Children 14 & Under: Free  
 SAM Members: Free

Tickets include access to all exhibitions. Tickets purchased onsite are suggested admission. Free to all on the First Thursday, First Saturday, and Second Thursday of each month and free for seniors (65+) monthly on First Friday.

**Photo credits:** The preserved façade of the Asian Art Museum. Photo: © Tim Griffith. Installation view of *Be/longing: Contemporary Asian Art* at the Asian Art Museum. Photo: © Adam Hunter/LMN Architects. Installation view of *Boundless: Stories of Asian Art* at the Asian Art Museum. Photo: © Jueqian Fang. Installation view of *Be/longing: Contemporary Asian Art* at the Asian Art Museum. Photo: © Adam Hunter/LMN Architects. The renovated Fuller Garden Court in the Asian Art Museum (facing doors to Park Lobby). Photo: © Adam Hunter/LMN Architects. Installation view of *Boundless: Stories of Asian Art* at the Asian Art Museum. Photo: © Jueqian Fang. Installation view of *Boundless: Stories of Asian Art* at the Asian Art Museum. Photo: © Jueqian Fang. The expansion on the east side of the Asian Art Museum (north view). Photo: © Tim Griffith. The new Park Lobby in the Asian Art Museum. Photo: © Adam Hunter/LMN Architects.

### **ABOUT SEATTLE ART MUSEUM**

As the leading visual art institution in the Pacific Northwest, SAM draws on its global collections, powerful exhibitions, and dynamic programs to provide unique educational resources benefiting the Seattle region, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. SAM was founded in 1933 with a focus on Asian art. By the late 1980s the museum had outgrown its original home, and in 1991 a new 155,000-square-foot downtown building, designed by Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates, opened to the public. The 1933 building was renovated and reopened as the Asian Art Museum in 1994 and will reopen on February 8, 2020 following an extensive renovation and expansion. SAM's desire to further serve its community was realized in 2007 with the opening of two stunning new facilities: the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park (designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architects)—a “museum without walls,” free and open to all—and the Allied Works Architecture designed 118,000-square-foot expansion of its main, downtown location, including 232,000 square feet of additional space built for future expansion. The Olympic Sculpture Park and SAM's downtown expansion celebrated their tenth anniversary in 2017.

From a strong foundation of Asian art to noteworthy collections of African and Oceanic art, Northwest Coast Native American art, European and American art, and modern and contemporary art, the strength of SAM's collection of approximately 25,000 objects lies in its diversity of media, cultures, and time periods.