

Press Release

Brooklyn Museum



Installation view, *Arts of the Himalayas*. On view beginning March 11, 2022. Brooklyn Museum. (Photo: Danny Perez)

Brooklyn Museum Reopens Entire Floor Devoted to Arts of Asia and the Islamic World in September 2022, Including Newly Installed Collections of Arts of South Asia and Arts of the Islamic World

The ten-year renovation project celebrates the diversity and encyclopedic scope of the Museum’s renowned collections across more than 20,000 square feet of space. Renovated for the first time in forty years, the floor now features nearly 700 objects, including newly conserved and rare works of art.

Opens September 30, 2022

The new home for the Arts of Asia and the Islamic World creates cross-cultural dialogue among collection areas and highlights diverse aesthetic, creative, social, and intellectual accomplishments across Asia and around the Mediterranean, from ancient times to the present day. These newly renovated galleries on the Museum’s second floor feature Asian and Islamic artworks in bespoke casework enhanced by state-of-the-art lighting. The renovations create greater flexibility, facilitating the rotation of installation objects to showcase a wider range of materials.

Arts of South Asia and Arts of the Islamic World will be the final galleries on the floor to reopen, marking the first time in ten years that artworks from across these collections—

which boast more than seventeen thousand objects, including sculptures, textiles, paintings, ceramics, drawings, prints, carvings, decorative arts, metalwork, and other artifacts—will be on view. Previous openings include the Arts of Korea gallery in 2017, the Arts of China and Arts of Japan galleries in 2019, the Arts of Southeast Asia gallery in 2021, and the Arts of Buddhism and Arts of the Himalayas galleries in 2022.

“We are thrilled for the long-awaited conclusion of this project,” says Joan Cummins, Lisa and Bernard Selz Senior Curator, Asian Art, Brooklyn Museum. “The new installation encourages a rich and nuanced understanding of the collections’ diversity and encyclopedic scope, ranging from Japanese guardian figures to Indian miniature paintings, from Chinese cloisonné altarpieces to Korean celadons. All objects were chosen and interpreted with an eye toward deepening understandings of the many facets of Asian cultural heritage. Future rotations of artworks will reintroduce different elements of our fantastic collections to our visitors.”

“It’s been a pleasure to bring the entirety of the floor back on view, which hasn’t been displayed in its full glory since 2012,” says Anne Pasternak, Shelby White and Leon Levy Director, Brooklyn Museum.

“We are particularly eager for visitors to engage with our Arts of the Islamic World collection, which showcases the creative and intellectual diversity of Islamic art in religious and secular contexts from different periods and regions in Asia, Africa, and Europe,” says Aysin Yoltar-Yıldırım, Hagop Kevorkian Associate Curator of Islamic Art, Brooklyn Museum.

ARTS OF SOUTH ASIA

The Museum’s collection of South Asian art includes extensive and important holdings of stone, metal, and wood sculptures, manuscript paintings, and decorative arts dating from the third millennium B.C.E. to the present. Particular strengths include early terracotta sculptures, Rajput miniature paintings, and Hindu temple sculptures from northern and central India. Several objects are on view for the first time in decades, including a tiny stone seal from the Indus Valley civilization of ancient Pakistan, six carved stone window screens (*jalis*) from a Rajasthani building, and a newly conserved, embroidered tent panel depicting scenes from romantic tales.

This gallery’s presentation of 123 objects emphasizes the sacred and secular traditions that have inspired the aesthetics and symbolism of art from South Asia. A large section is devoted to the arts of Hinduism, with introductions to the religion’s major deities. Other sections feature India’s earliest art-making traditions and objects made in service of the Jain religion. Architectural elements from wood and stone temples and other buildings are installed in a manner that evokes their original settings. Additionally, a section on the later arts of India, including those inspired by Islam, features decorative objects, architectural elements, paintings, and textiles.

ARTS OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD

This gallery displays 143 objects from Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America spread across fourteen centuries and mediums including textiles, ceramics, works on paper, metalwork, and glass. The geographical swath represented in the galleries exemplifies the extent of Islam’s wide influence. Highlights include furnishings from religious and palatial buildings, a large, low-lying case of ceramic and glass vessels for food and drink, and the Museum’s important collection of Qajar paintings from Iran.

Divided into sections dedicated to religious and secular works, the gallery presents diverse artistic developments in regions where Islam became a dominant faith and political power. Objects from different areas or periods appear side by side, showing how various Islamic traditions adopted artistic concepts.

ARTS OF BUDDHISM

Drawing on multiple areas of the Asian art collection, the 68 objects in the Arts of Buddhism gallery focus on the exchange of ideas between regions and cultures, serving as an introduction to the tenets and history of the religion. Through the juxtaposition of images from diverse traditions and historical periods, the installation illustrates the mix of continuity and innovation that has characterized Buddhist art throughout Asia.

Among the objects on view are several of the Museum's masterpieces, including a rare eighth-century image of the goddess Tara from Odisha, India; a Chinese silver reliquary dedicated by a Buddhist monk and his mother; and a gilt bronze seated Buddha from southern China. As part of the inaugural installation of the gallery, a pair of rare, beautifully preserved fourteenth-century Japanese mandala paintings is on view for the first time in twenty-five years.

ARTS OF THE HIMALAYAS

In March 2022, the Museum opened a gallery devoted to Himalayan art for the first time. Himalayan Asia, which includes the Tibetan Plateau and surrounding regions, is a geographic and cultural crossroads between South, East, and West Asia. The Museum's small but significant collection of 23 Himalayan artworks reflects the region's diverse influences and distinctive cultures and traditions. The approximately thirty standout objects on display are mostly devotional in nature, representing both Buddhist and Hindu traditions. They include a painted wood sculpture of a Nepalese goddess, stone reliefs, and smaller treasures including bronze, stone, and ivory sculptures as well as a rare bone apron.

ARTS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

The 35 objects in the Arts of Southeast Asia gallery represent nearly a millennium of history, celebrating the distinct cultural, aesthetic, and religious traditions of the lands now called Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Indonesia. The Museum's collection focuses on the remains of important ancient kingdoms, which built large stone or brick temples dedicated primarily to the deities of Hinduism and Buddhism. At the gallery's center is a trio of standing figures, sculpted in stone in Cambodia between the tenth and twelfth centuries. Also notable is a handsome fragment of a Thai bronze Buddha sculpture dating to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century.

Interpretation of the objects focuses on how they were made and used, and by whom. In the case of figural imagery, interpretative text examines religious and royal iconography. While the objects are arranged by region of origin, labels point to moments of intersection when regions traded ideas and forms.

ARTS OF CHINA

Highlighting five thousand years of Chinese artistic accomplishments and their rich diversity, this gallery includes bronzes, ceramics, paintings, and selections from the

Museum's unrivaled collection of cloisonné enamels. Many of the installation's 135 works had not been on view for decades prior to the gallery's reopening in 2019. Key subjects include funerary arts related to early Chinese tombs and burials; ritual objects related to ancestor worship, Buddhism, and Daoism; and the arts of the imperial court and scholar-officials.

Notably, this nearly encyclopedic display of Chinese artworks includes contemporary art. Since 2014, the Museum has acquired over fifty contemporary paintings and sculptures by artists of Chinese descent, which are displayed on a rotating basis in the gallery, often in conversation with historic works.

ARTS OF JAPAN

This gallery's 66 artworks trace over two thousand years of innovation in Japanese art, including Buddhist temple sculptures, ukiyo-e prints, paintings, and lacquerware. Among the masterworks on display is an oversized painted wood head of a thirteenth-century guardian figure, with bared teeth and glinting crystal eyes, that stood in a Buddhist temple to ward off enemies. A large area has been set aside for the Museum's growing collection of ceramics by contemporary artists, often juxtaposed with related historic pieces. Displayed prominently is a presentation of Ainu artifacts, unparalleled outside Japan, that points to the cultural diversity within the country—an important facet often overlooked by Western scholars.

ARTS OF KOREA

A pioneer in the collection and display of Korean art, the Museum has amassed one of the country's premier Korean art collections and was one of the first U.S. museums to establish a permanent Korean art gallery. The approximately ninety-five objects on view occupy a gallery triple the size of the original space and include ceramics, paintings, textiles, costumes, furniture, sculptures, metalwork, glass, arms and armor, and other decorative arts from the Three Kingdoms period to the early twentieth century. Objects of note include the twelfth-century *Ewer in the Shape of a Lotus Bud*, considered one of the world's finest Korean ceramics on account of its delicate modeling and restrained decoration, and elaborate sixth-century earrings that demonstrate the diffusion of art-making techniques across the Silk Routes that connected East and West.

Curatorial Credits

The Arts of Asia galleries are organized by Joan Cummins, Lisa and Bernard Selz Senior Curator, Asian Art, in collaboration with Susan Beningson (Arts of China) and Alison Baldassano (Arts of the Himalayas).

The Arts of the Islamic World galleries are organized by Ayşin Yoltar-Yıldırım, Hagop Kevorkian Associate Curator of Islamic Art.

Sponsor Credits

Arts of Korea:

The reinstallation of the Korea collection is made possible by the National Museum of Korea and Young Hwan Jeong.

Arts of Japan:

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Arts of Asia:

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