New Exhibition at BAMPFA Illuminates History of Indian Painting Traditions

On View June 28–September 10, 2017

Five Centuries of Indian Paintings on View in *Divine Visions, Earthly Pleasures*

(Berkeley, CA) June 27, 2017—This summer, the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) presents a new exhibition of paintings that encompasses five hundred years of Indian art-making traditions. *Divine Visions, Earthly Pleasures: Five Hundred Years of Indian Painting* draws on the institution’s extensive holdings of Asian art, in particular a renowned collection of more than three hundred works donated to BAMPFA in 1998. Guest curated by the distinguished Indian art scholar Robert J. Del Bontà, the exhibition is on view from June 28 through September 10, 2017.

*Divine Visions, Earthly Pleasures* comprises more than sixty paintings from BAMPFA’s collection, representing a vast range of Indian art and cultural history from the early fifteenth through twentieth centuries. Reflecting the distinctive collecting interests of Jean and Francis Marshall—whose gift forms the core of BAMPFA’s Indian art holdings—the works display a diverse array of subject matter, ranging from early religious traditions and aristocratic portraiture to romantic narratives and musical performances. By presenting some early extant examples of Indian painting alongside more recent works, the exhibition illuminates common aesthetic conventions—in particular a subtle interplay between realistic and abstract forms that emerges as a persistent theme across centuries of artistic practice.
“Since Jean and Francis Marshall’s transformative gift in 1998, BAMPFA’s Asian art holdings have grown to be one of the defining strengths of our encyclopedic collection—and we’re thrilled to highlight that strength with a show that brings some of most exceptional of these works together for the first time in years,” said Lawrence Rinder, director and chief curator of BAMPFA. “We are especially grateful to our friend and colleague Robert J. Del Bontà for providing a fresh scholarly perspective on these paintings that will allow our visitors to rediscover them in a new and illuminating context.”

“For more than five hundred years, the Indian subcontinent has nurtured some of the world’s most vibrant and distinctive painting traditions, which are richly encapsulated in BAMFPA’s remarkable collection,” said Del Bontà, who previously served as research associate and guest curator at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. “The works in this exhibition present subtle interplays between representational and abstract aesthetics and between sacred and secular subject matter—often in a single painting. It’s a pleasure to partner with BAMPFA in sharing these breathtaking works with the public.”

On Saturday, July 8, Del Bontà presents a lecture at BAMPFA entitled *Picturing Music: Ragamala Painting*, which highlights connections between Indian painting and the *ragamala* tradition of musical poetry that dates back to at least the fifteenth century. The lecture takes place at 1:30 p.m. and will be followed by a 3 p.m. performance of traditional *ragamala* music by Gautam Tejas Ganeshan. Both programs are free with admission. In conjunction with the exhibition, BAMPFA is also presenting a weeklong retrospective of the films of Amit Dutta, the acclaimed Indian director whose work explores Indian painting traditions; the series runs from September 3 through 10 and includes an introduction by Del Bontà. More information about individual film screenings is available on BAMPFA’s [website](http://bampfa.org).

**Support**

*Divine Visions, Earthly Pleasures: Five Hundred Years of Indian Painting* is organized by guest curator Robert J. Del Bontà, with funding provided by the Asian Art Endowment Fund.

**Above**


**Visitor Information**

**Address**

2155 Center Street, Berkeley, CA 94704

**Hours**

Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Fridays and Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

**Information**

bampfa.org

(510) 642-0808

**Gallery Admission**

$12 general admission
$10 non-Berkeley students, disabled, 65+
Free for BAMPFA members; UC Berkeley students, faculty, staff, and retirees; 18 & under + one adult
Free First Thursdays: Free gallery admission on the first Thursday of each month
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About BAMPFA
An internationally recognized arts institution with deep roots in the Bay Area, the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) is a forum for cultural experiences that transform individuals and advance the local, national, and global discourse on art and film. BAMPFA is UC Berkeley’s premier visual arts venue, presenting more than 450 film screenings, scores of public programs, and up to twenty exhibitions annually. With its vibrant and eclectic programming, BAMPFA inspires the imagination and ignites critical dialogue through art, film, and other forms of creative expression.

The institution’s collection of more than 19,000 works of art dates from 3,000 BCE to the present day and includes important holdings of Neolithic Chinese ceramics, Ming and Qing Dynasty Chinese painting, Old Master works on paper, Italian Baroque painting, early American painting, Abstract Expressionist painting, contemporary photography, and Conceptual art. BAMPFA’s collection also includes more than 17,500 films and videos, including the largest collection of Japanese cinema outside of Japan, impressive holdings of Soviet cinema, West Coast avant-garde film, seminal video art, as well as hundreds of thousands of articles, reviews, posters, and other ephemera related to the history of film.