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**Media Contacts:**

Catherine Pierre  
410-547-9000, ext. 304  
cpierre@thewalters.org

Jennifer Renard  
410-547-9000, ext. 277  
jrenard@thewalters.org

**WALTERS ART MUSEUM ANNOUNCES MAJOR GIFT OF ASIAN ART**

**Doris Duke Charitable Foundation Gives More than 150 Objects from  
Thailand, Burma, and Cambodia**

Baltimore, Maryland—The Walters Art Museum has received a major gift of artworks from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation’s Southeast Asian Art Collection. The gift comprises more than 150 objects, including Thai, Burmese, and Cambodian sculptures in bronze, stone, and wood; Thai and Burmese woodcarvings for temples; paintings on cloth; illustrated manuscripts, and a wide variety of decorative objects. The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation is dividing its collection among several museums and art institutions in the United States, with the most significant portions going to the Walters and to the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. This important gift recognizes the high quality of the Walters’ scholarship in the field of Asian art, and it significantly strengthens the museum’s remarkable Asian collection, which includes more than 6,000 works of Chinese, Japanese, Southeast Asian, and Indian art.

“William and Henry Walters were avid collectors of Asian art,” said Gary Vikan, director. “The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation’s extremely generous gift is a significant addition to the museum’s already strong Asian holdings, and it will greatly enhance the experience of Asian art for our visitors.”

“It is an honor to have been awarded such a significant gift,” said Dr. Robert Feinberg, president of the Walters’ board of trustees. “It confirms both the importance of the museum’s Asian holdings and the strength of its scholarship in this field.”

“The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation gift adds significant older pieces of sculpture from Thailand and Cambodia, adds important Burmese works of art, and gives the Walters a remarkable collection of 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century paintings on cloth and gilt-lacquer book

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cabinets from Thailand,” said Dr. Hiram Woodward, the Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Quincy Scott Curator of Asian Art. “Thailand—once called Siam—was never colonized, so its traditional culture remained vibrant throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This gift provides a remarkable insight into this great culture.”

Objects of particular note from the collection include a great accordion-pleated manuscript on the characteristics of elephants, both real and divine, exquisitely painted in Bangkok in about the 1830s; a six-foot-high 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup>-century Burmese lacquer image of the Buddha, depicted with the attire of royalty; and a 19<sup>th</sup>-century carved wooden pulpit from Thailand.

The 60 Thai paintings in this gift, on both wood and cloth, are some of the most important Thai works extant in the United States and include sets of paintings illustrating the previous lives of the Buddha, as well as three extensive narrative scrolls, which were unrolled by storytellers in northeastern Thailand as they related religious tales. Also in the collection are sumptuous Thai decorative arts of silver, ivory, and gilded lacquer. There are also ivories, traditional gold jewelry, and beautifully enameled ceramics made in China for export to Thailand. Important older objects include a Cambodian stone torso of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, terracotta figures from Thailand dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and figural ceramic sculptures produced in Thailand in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Asian Art at the Walters**

When the Walters Art Museum first opened its doors in 1931, it already had a significant collection of Asian art. William Walters had acquired primarily Chinese and Japanese works; by 1884, his collection included 4,100 objects. Henry Walters expanded the collection in the decades between his father’s death in 1894 and his own in 1931. These years saw the acquisition of Chinese paintings, archaic Chinese bronzes, major examples of Chinese Buddhist sculpture, and several great Moghul manuscripts from India, as well as contemporary Japanese works, which Henry Walters acquired at international fairs in 1904 and 1916.

Since Henry’s death, the Walters’ Asian collection has been greatly enriched by acquisitions as well as private donations. In 1992, the Walters acquired one of the most comprehensive collections of Thai sculpture in the world, from the collection of Baltimorean Alexander B. Griswold. This collection was the basis for a book published in 1997, *The Sacred Sculpture of Thailand*, which presented the results of a collaborative research project

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between Dr. Woodward and the museum's Division of Conservation and Technical Research, and established the Walters as a leading center for the study of the art of Thailand.

Currently, the Walters displays more than 1,000 works of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian, and Southeast Asian art. Highlights include Japanese arms and armor, and Chinese and Japanese porcelains, lacquers, and metalwork. The oldest surviving Chinese wood-and-lacquer image of the Buddha, dating to the late 6th century A.D., is on display in its own gallery on the second floor of Hackerman House, the 1850 townhouse that holds the museum's Asian art collection.

### **The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**

The mission of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation is to improve the quality of people's lives by nurturing the arts, protecting and restoring the environment, seeking cures for diseases, and helping to protect children from abuse and neglect. Established in 1996, the foundation supports four national grantmaking programs. It also oversees three properties that were owned by Doris Duke in Hillsborough, New Jersey; Honolulu, Hawaii; and Newport, Rhode Island. The foundation's activities are guided by the will of Doris Duke, who endowed the foundation with financial assets that currently total approximately \$1.3 billion. As of December 31, 2001, the foundation has approved 288 grants totaling more than \$286 million to support nonprofit organizations throughout the United States. More information on the foundation can be found at [www.ddcf.org](http://www.ddcf.org).

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