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An Illustration to the Ramayana, Rama and Lakshman Visit an Ashram India, Malwa, circa 1680s. Color on paper. Gift of Pratapaditya and Chitra Pal.

Museum Receives Significant Collections "From India and Beyond" Recent Gifts Now on View in SBMA Exhibition through June 6

March 6 – June 6, 2010

April 27, 2010 – In 2008, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art (SBMA) received two of the largest and most significant gifts of Indian, Southeast Asian, and Himalayan art in its nearly 70-year history. The more than 300 individual works from two prominent scholar-collectors have fundamentally transformed the Museum's South Asian collection, and selected gifts are currently on view in the exhibition ***From India and Beyond: Gifts from Stephen Huyler and the Pal Family Collection*** through June 6.

Dr. Stephen Huyler, art historian, cultural anthropologist, and photographer, has given SBMA his collection of 220 clay sculptures of animal and figural forms, dating primarily from India's prehistory through its early historical periods (2500 BCE – 800 CE). Through this gift, the Museum now may boast that it has one of the finest collections of small-scale Indian terracotta art in this country.



Horse Maurya period (circa 320-200 BCE) Pataliputra (modern day Patna). Hand-modeled with red slip. Gift of Stephen P. Huyler.

Woman with Elaborate Headdress and Auspicious Hair Ornaments Carrying Fish, Chandraketurgarh, West Bengal, Shunga period (circa 200-50 BCE). Molded terracotta. Gift of Stephen P. Huyler.

Toy Elephant Cart Chandraketurgarh, West Bengal, Shunga period (circa 200-50 BCE). Molded and hand-modeled. Gift of Stephen P. Huyler.

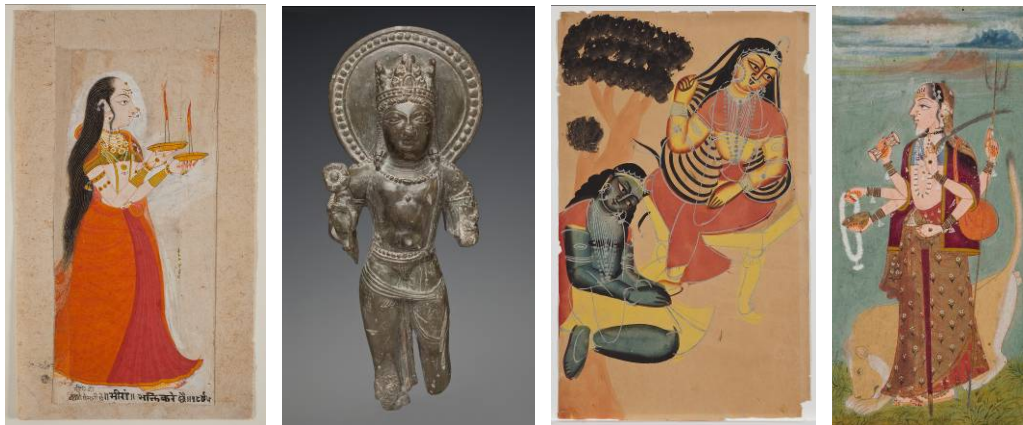
Yaksha Rattle Chandraketurgarh, Shunga period (circa 200-50 BCE). Double-molded. Gift of Stephen P. Huyler.

Female Figure Pataliputra (modern-day Patna, Bihar), Maurya period (circa 320-200 BCE). Hand-modeled. Gift of Stephen P. Huyler.

Animals, birds, and male and female figures feature prominently among terracotta art from India's prehistory to the present day. Many of these figurines were created as votive offerings for the gods while many were images of deities used in worship. Others are toys, some of which were equipped with wheels and pellets inside as rattles, while others are simply ornaments. The abundance of female forms suggests the importance of mother-goddess worship. The well-endowed female body, sometimes decorated with floral and vegetal motifs, signify fertility and abundance, longings that stem from India's agrarian culture. More specific deities include the Yaksha and Yakshi, the Hindu mythological custodians of natural treasures. Yaksha and Yakshi were among the earliest of deities represented in India, preceding images of Buddhist bodhisattvas and later Hindu deities. In their benevolent or demonic manifestations, they are powerful deities, capable of protecting human beings from disasters. They also bring about prosperity, happiness, and good health and are considered auspicious.

Essentially ephemeral, many terracotta sculptures were made for daily use or seasonal festivals while others, such as those adorning monumental architecture, were intended to last longer. Because clay is abundant, inexpensive, and can be easily shaped and replaced, many of these sculptures are notable for their playfulness and imagination. Clay artisans in India continue the tradition to this day, improvising, experimenting, and fashioning sculptures with great spontaneity and vitality.

The Pal Family collection gift, dating from the 2nd century to the early 20th century, has greatly expanded the scope of SBMA's collection of Indian pictorial art, including manuscript illustrations, miniature paintings, drawings, popular paintings from Orissa and West Bengal, and works from the British colonial period. It also includes important Hindu and Buddhist stone and bronze sculptures from Kashmir, Nepal, and Tibet as well as paintings from Myanmar (Burma) and Sri Lanka.



Saint Mirabai Pemji of Chitod, India, Mewar, Rajasthan, dated 1838. Color and gold on paper. Gift of Pratapaditya and Chitra Pal

Vishnu Kashmir, 8th century. Green stone. Gift of Pratapaditya and Chitra Pal.

Krishna Beg Forgiveness at Radha's Feet India, Kolkata (Calcutta), West Bengal, late 19th century. Pencil, color, and silver on paper. Gift of Pratapaditya and Chitra Pal

Beard Goddess Durga with Lion India, Bikaner, 18th century, color and gold on paper. Gift of Pratapaditya and Chitra Pal.

The examples of pictorial art usually illustrate the most significant cultural and religious tales. **Ramayana** is one of the two great epics of India dealing with the story of Rama (an incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu), his wife Sita, and brother Lakshmana. The lead image depicts the scene when Rama and Lakshmana visited the hermitage of a female ascetic during their stay in the forest.

Goddess Durga is the consort of the Hindu god Shiva. Together, Shiva and Durga represent the male and female principles of the cosmos. The above, far right image, is a representation of Durga with both principles combined symbolically to suggest that they are in fact inseparable, a non-duality. The feminine face of Durga is shown with a beard and holding some of Shiva's attributes — an hourglass-like drum, a trident, and a beggar's bowl. She is not, however, without attributes to identify her as the great goddess

Durga. In her hands one finds swords and a garland of white flowers as well as a voluminous scarlet pouch hanging from her left shoulder. Her animal vehicle, the lion, licks its paws, ready to give her a ride.

From India and Beyond celebrates the beauty and diversity of South Asian art through the distinctive visions of two scholars whose life-long collecting and generosity have so enriched this Museum. In recent conversations with the collectors, both Dr. Huyler and Dr. Pal expressed a growing sense of detachment from worldly possessions, in the spirit of Hindu and Buddhist teachings that led to the gifting of their collections.

More About the Donors

Dr. Stephen Huyler grew up in Ojai and credits his lifelong fascination with the arts and crafts of India to the mentorship of his neighbors, F. Bailey Vanderhoef, Jr., late Trustee and major benefactor of the Museum, and Beatrice Wood, renowned ceramic artist. In 1986 at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Huyler assisted in curating the first major exhibition devoted to the subject of Indian terracotta art, ***From India Earth 400 Years of Terracotta Art***. Ten years later, he published ***Gifts of Earth Terracottas and Clay Sculptures of India*** (1996), an intensive study of the Indian potters' and clay sculptors' art today.

Dr. Pratapaditya Pal remains one of the most influential forces in advancing the interest and understanding of South Asian and Himalayan art. Over a four decade long curatorial career, Pratapaditya Pal has been associated with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena and the Art Institute of Chicago. Currently he is General Editor of Marg Publications, Mumbai. Dr. Pal characterizes his private collecting as driven by idiosyncratic preferences and, to avoid conflicts of interest, outside the main focuses of the museum collections he oversaw. Consequently, the Pal collection is diverse, offering fresh insight into the rich history of art and culture in South Asia.

Related Programming

Free Lecture

Experiencing Indian Art and Culture: Dialogues with Dr. Stephen Huyler and Dr. Pratapaditya Pal
Sunday, May 2, 10 am - 3:30 pm

In celebration of the significant gifts of Indian and South Asian art, this program features these two distinguished scholar-collectors who will share their passion and knowledge of the rich art and culture of India. Additional participants include Gerald Larson, professor emeritus of Religious Studies at UC Santa Barbara and Susan Tai, Elizabeth Atkins Curator of Asian Art at SBMA. Closing remarks by Consul General Susmita G. Thomas of India.

Mary Craig Auditorium. Seating is limited. First come, first seated.

Program:

10 am: Experiencing India and the Art of Terracotta

Dr. Huyler and Dr. Pal

1:30 pm: Indian Art and Culture

Dr. Pal and Professor Gerald Larson

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is a privately funded, not-for-profit institution that presents internationally recognized collections and exhibitions and a broad array of cultural and educational activities as well as travel opportunities around the world.

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA.

Open Tuesday - Sunday 11 am to 5 pm. Closed Monday.

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