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ASIAN ART MUSEUM TO INSTALL TWO JAPANESE BRONZE LIONS ON FRONT STEPS

SAN FRANCISCO, May 8, 2013— On May 13th, the Asian Art Museum will install two monumental Japanese bronze lion sculptures on granite plinths outside the museum's front entrance on Larkin Street. Recently acquired by the museum through a donation from longtime supporter Marsha Vargas Handley in memory of Raymond G. Handley, the 800 lb. sculptures date to the late nineteenth century and are similar to the majestic guardian lions typically placed opposite each other outside Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines.

The lion to be installed on the museum's south side has its left paw resting on a Buddhist jewel, with an openwork design of sculpted peonies, a flower closely associated with lions. The south lion's mouth is open, and the north lion's is closed, symbolizing the sounds and spirit of the Japanese pronunciation of the first and last letters of the Sanskrit alphabet: "A" is pronounced with the mouth open, and "Un" with the mouth closed.

These lions' enormous size—nearly five feet tall and six feet long—and standing positions are unusual. Paired guardian lions outside shrines today are often shown seated or crouching, and most are made of stone, wood, or, less commonly, ceramic. This pair of large sculptures also stands out in material (bronze). Relatively few bronze guardian lions from before World War II survive, due in part to mandatory metal collections ordered by the Japanese government during the war.

The lions have undergone extensive conservation treatment, including repairs to the feet that fasten them to a new, customized base—a strategy of earthquake preparedness. Several layers of protective coating were applied to resist weathering of the surface.

Details for a forthcoming ceremonial unveiling event will be announced soon.

ABOUT THE ASIAN ART MUSEUM

The Asian Art Museum—Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture is one of San Francisco's premier arts institutions and home to a world-renown collection of more than 18,000 Asian Art treasures spanning 6000 years of history. Through rich art experiences,

centered on historic and contemporary artworks, the Asian Art Museum unlocks the past for visitors, bringing it to life, while serving as a catalyst for new art, new creativity and new thinking.

Information: 415.581.3500 or www.asianart.org

Location: 200 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

Hours: The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. From February through October, hours are extended on Thursdays until 9:00 pm. Closed Mondays, as well as New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

General Admission: FREE for museum members, \$12 for adults, \$8 for seniors (65+), college students with ID, and youths (13–17). FREE for children under 12 and SFUSD students with ID. Admission on Thursdays after 5:00 pm is \$5 for all visitors (except those under 12, SFUSD students, and members, who are always admitted FREE). Admission is FREE to all on Target First Free Sundays (the first Sunday of every month). A surcharge may apply for admission into special exhibitions.

Access: The Asian Art Museum is wheelchair accessible. For more information regarding access: 415.581.3598; TDD: 415.861.2035.

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