

NEWS

ASIAN ART MUSEUM
Chong-Moon Lee Center
for Asian Art & Culture



200 Larkin Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
T 415.581.3500

**Asian
Art
Museum**

PRESS CONTACT:

Zac T. Rose
415.581.3560
zrose@asianart.org

Asian Art Museum Deaccessioning Two Sandstone Lintels

SAN FRANCISCO, September 22, 2020 — The Asian Art Museum anticipates deaccessioning two sandstone lintels and aims to present the works for a return to the ancient monuments in Thailand where they originated or to a Thai museum that the Thai government may consider appropriate to provide custody. The decision to deaccession these artworks comes after a three-year-long study of information provided and reviewed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Thai officials, the San Francisco City Attorney, and Asian Art Museum experts. The lintels are part of the City and County of San Francisco's collection, and the museum is the steward of that collection.

Photo documentation shows that the lintels were in situ as late as the 1950s in the buildings of the archaeological sites from which they originated in Thailand. Research found a lack of evidence documenting that the lintels were removed from Thailand in accordance with guidelines specified in the 1935 and 1965 Thai laws governing the sale of antiquities from the country's designated national archaeological sites. The museum's study found no evidence that these lintels were removed from their sites contrary to the laws of Thailand, but the museum was also unable to locate copies of the export documents that the laws of that time required. With this information in hand, the museum felt it was appropriate to begin the process of deaccessioning the artworks from the collection and to move forward with returning them to the Thai authorities.

The museum is looking forward to finalizing the process with Thai authorities for determining when and where the lintels will return to Thailand. The museum expresses its deep gratitude and respect to the government and the people of Thailand. The museum is honored to have served as stewards of these artworks and grateful for the opportunity to have cared for and preserved these artworks for future generations, and to have shared them with global audiences for the past fifty years. The museum offers its best wishes and delight in returning these two artworks to the contexts from which they come.

The lintels, overdoor architectural elements, originate from present-day Northeastern Thailand. One is from Nong Hong Temple and dates to 1000-1080. It entered the Asian Art Museum collection in

1966 as part of the promised gift of Avery Brundage, the collector whose donation of 7,000 artworks to the City of San Francisco served as the founding of the museum. The second is from Khao Lon Temple and dates to 975-1025. It was acquired in 1968 via museum purchase. Both lintels were purchased from European dealers. Countless global scholars, students, and the public have viewed and studied the lintels over this time. In 2017, the museum removed the lintels from display to make them available for further examination.

The Asian Art Museum respects all inquiries about the provenance of its collection, which is why it makes its objects and artworks available for study not only through online and print publications but in galleries as well, ensuring visitors are aware of the sometimes controversial backgrounds of antiquities displayed away from their place of origin. Following all UNESCO guidelines on cultural property, the museum strives to remain transparent and responsive partners with national governments, international museums, and heritage organizations, as well as community organizers and has built strong, lasting relationships with these institutions and individuals across Asia and around the world. These relationships are rooted in the deep understanding that questions of ownership must be addressed through open channels and in the spirit of mutual respect. The Asian Art Museum believes this spirit embodies the museum's core mission of researching and preserving works of art to celebrate the cultures that made them and to "make Asian art and culture essential to everyone" across all borders.

About the Asian Art Museum

Located in the heart of San Francisco, the Asian Art Museum is home to one of the world's finest collections of Asian art, with more than 18,000 awe-inspiring artworks ranging from ancient jades and ceramics to contemporary video installations. Dynamic special exhibitions, cultural celebrations and public programs for all ages provide rich art experiences that unlock the 6,000 years of history and spark questions about the future.

Information: 415.581.3500 or www.asianart.org

Location: 200 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

Hours: The museum is open Thursdays, 1PM to 8PM and Fridays–Mondays, 10AM to 5PM. The museum is closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays, as well as New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

Museum Admission: Free for museum members, children (12 & under), active duty military, essential workers, and SFUSD students. \$15 for adults and \$10 for seniors (65 & over), youth (13–17), and college students (with ID). Please check website for updates.

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

Never miss a moment: @AsianArtMuseum

####