

Powerful Protection

Pre-Visit Lesson Plan

Overview

Protection from danger is a recurrent theme in Buddhist art from Himalayan Asia. This lesson introduces the concept of peaceful and wrathful protection figures, and encourages students to make connections to various types of protection in their own lives.

Goals— Students will be able to:

- examine and decode Himalayan Buddhist works of art
- identify the differences between peaceful and wrathful protection
- make connections between these images and their own lives by designing a personal protector

Subject Areas

Visual Arts, English Language Arts, World History

Grades

Upper Elementary School, Middle School, High School

Key Vocabulary

- **Peaceful:** tranquil; calm; graceful
- **Wrathful:** vengeful; angry
- **Protection:** preservation from injury or harm
- **Buddhism:** a belief system based on the teachings of the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, focusing on the attainment of release from an endless cycle of death and rebirth through enlightenment, or spiritual awakening.

Materials Needed

Visit rmanyc.org/pre-visit for more downloadable pre-visit lesson plans and handouts.

- Handout: map of Himalayan Asia (p. 6)
- Handout: full-page image of **Green Tara** (p.7)
- Handout: full-page image of **Begste** (p. 8)
- Blank paper
- Pencils, colored pencils, or crayons

Common Core Standards: ELA & History

1. College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for **Speaking and Listening**, including *comprehension and collaboration*, and *presentation of knowledge and ideas*.
2. College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for **Language**, including *conventions of standard English*, *knowledge of language*, and *vocabulary acquisition and use*.

National Standards

1. Visual Arts: Choosing and Evaluating a Range of Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas
2. Visual Arts: Understanding the Visual Arts in Relation to History and Cultures
3. English Language Arts: Communication Skills
4. English Language Arts: Multicultural Understanding
5. English Language Arts: Applying Language Skills

New York State Standards

Arts, Social Studies, Global History, and English as a Second Language

1. Creating, Performing and Participating in the Arts
2. Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources
3. Responding to Analyzing Works of Art
4. Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts

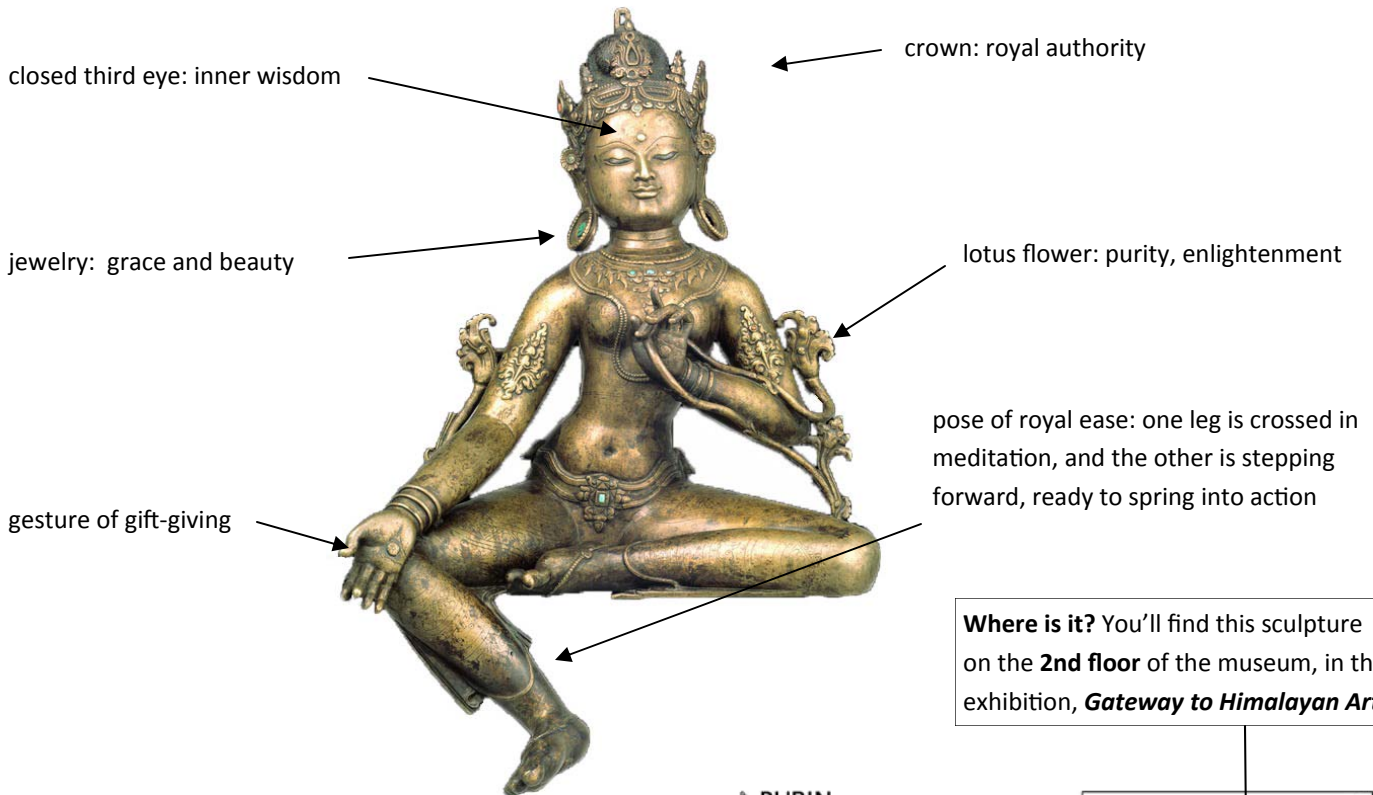
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About Green Tara

This 13th century brass sculpture of Green Tara was made using lost wax casting, an ancient technique for creating strong and ornate sculptures. Green Tara is one of the most popular female deities in Himalayan Buddhism, and images of her can be found in many monasteries and temples. She is depicted in her signature pose with a slight tilt to the right side in a posture known as "royal ease." She has three eyes; her third eye is closed, signifying inner wisdom. Her left leg is folded in a meditation posture, folded at the knee with her foot almost tucked beneath her, while her right leg dangles forward, slightly bent at the knee as if she is about to spring into action, ready to help where she is needed.

Within the Buddhist tradition it is said that prior to her enlightenment, in ages past, she promised that after she reached awakening she would always appear in female form for the benefit of all living beings. She is a strong example of a peaceful deity; a figure who assists others through kindness and compassion. Tara is looked to for protection from fear and dangers, and has many different manifestations which can all appear slightly different in painted or sculptural forms. Green Tara is the principal form of the goddess, and personifies her ability to perform all activities.



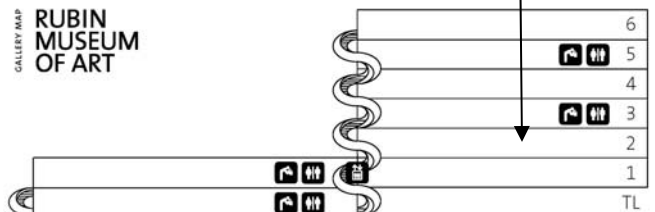
Where is it? You'll find this sculpture on the **2nd floor** of the museum, in the exhibition, **Gateway to Himalayan Art**.

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OF ART**

150 W 17TH STREET, NYC 10011
212.620.5000 RManyc.org

Green Tara

Tibet; 13th century
Brass with inlays of silver
18.5" h. x 12.5" w. x 9.5" d.
(See p. 7 for full-page image.)



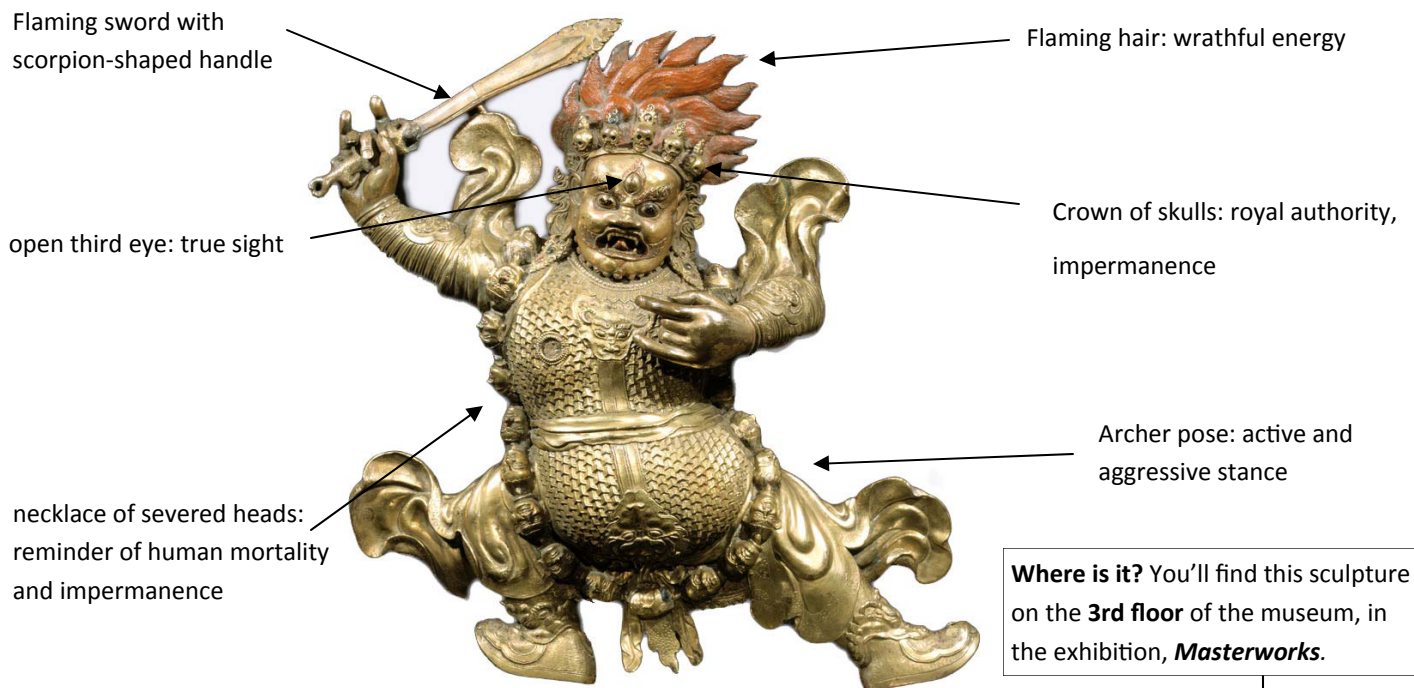
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About Begste

This striking Mongolian sculpture depicts the **wrathful** protector deity Begste wielding a sword with a scorpion shaped handle, and was made using lost wax casting, an ancient technique for creating strong and ornate sculptures. Begste stands in the archer pose, a dynamic and active stance. He has three eyes; his third eye is open, signifying true sight and the ability to see through lies. Instead of a beautiful crown emblazoned with semi precious stones, he wears a crown of five skulls and a necklace of severed human heads. His hair springs from his head like flames.

Begste's name means "coat of mail," and his ferocious appearance is an excellent example of a wrathful protection. His responsibilities include defending the institutions and practitioners of Buddhism from harm. Begste, along with several other wrathful deities, have their origins as pre-Buddhist Central Asian war gods. In Himalayan Buddhist traditions there are many wrathful deities like Begste who appear frightening but are, in fact, powerful helpers who assist Buddhist practitioners on their quest toward enlightenment. Tantric deities like these are the focus of esoteric religious practices that aim to radically transform conventional understandings of reality.



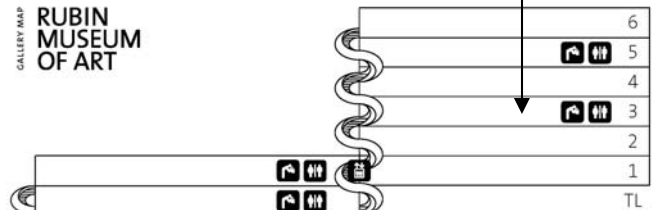
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Begste

Mongolia; late 18th-early 19th century
Gilt copper alloy with pigment
21" h. x 18.75" w. x 9.5" d.
(See p. 8 for full-page image)

GALLERY MAP
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Powerful Protection

Pre-Visit Lesson Plan

Lesson Flow (40 minutes)

- Use map of Himalayan Asia (p. 6) to identify the countries and geography that make up this region.
- Invite students to quietly examine the image of **Green Tara** (p. 7) before engaging in a group discussion of the following questions.
 1. What details do you see in this sculpture that make you curious?
 2. Gather a list of words that you could use to describe this figure's pose. What do they have in common?
 3. What do you notice about this figure's face? How about its hands?
 4. Look closely at the texture on the surface of this sculpture. How do you think the artist made it?
- After 5-10 minutes of discussion, share some information about **Green Tara** with students.
- Now, invite students to quietly examine the image of **Begste** (p. 8) before engaging in a group discussion of these questions.
 1. How does this sculpture of **Begste** compare to **Green Tara**?
 2. What details do you see in this sculpture that make you curious?
 3. Gather a list of words that you could use to describe this figure's pose. What do they have in common?
 4. What do you notice about this figure's face? How about its hands?
 5. Look closely at the texture on the surface of this sculpture. How do you think the artist made it?
- After 5-10 minutes of discussion, share some information about **Begste** with students.
- Be sure to define the words **peaceful** and **wrathful**.

Activity

Ask students to imagine their own personal protector to help them with a real problem they live with today. What would the protector look like? Would it be peaceful or wrathful? What would it carry in its hands? Ask students to draw their idea, using Himalayan Buddhist protectors like **Green Tara** and **Begste** as inspiration. Get creative! Remember to refer back to peaceful and wrathful protection when students share out their work.

Assessment

- ◆ In what ways did students demonstrate familiarity with the Himalayan region?
- ◆ What aspects of protection did students identify in discussions?
- ◆ How did students use the symbolism of traditional Buddhist protection in their personal protectors?

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Online Resources for Further Learning

www.rmanyc.org/schools

School Programs at the Rubin Museum of Art

Browse and learn about the different programs the museum has to offer for K–12 students and teachers

www.rmanyc.org/masterworks

Masterworks: Jewels of the Collection

Explore exhibition resources related to the museum’s permanent Masterworks exhibition.

www.rmanyc.org/gateway

Gateway to Himalayan Art

Explore exhibition resources related to the museum’s permanent Gateway exhibition.

<http://www.googleartproject.com/collection/rubin-museum-of-art>

Google Art Project

Journey into the Rubin’s collection like never before, and create & share your own collections of art online .

<http://interactive.rma2.org/>

Educational Interactive Library

Explore the museum’s in-gallery interactive software on this website.

www.himalayanart.org

Himalayan Art Resources

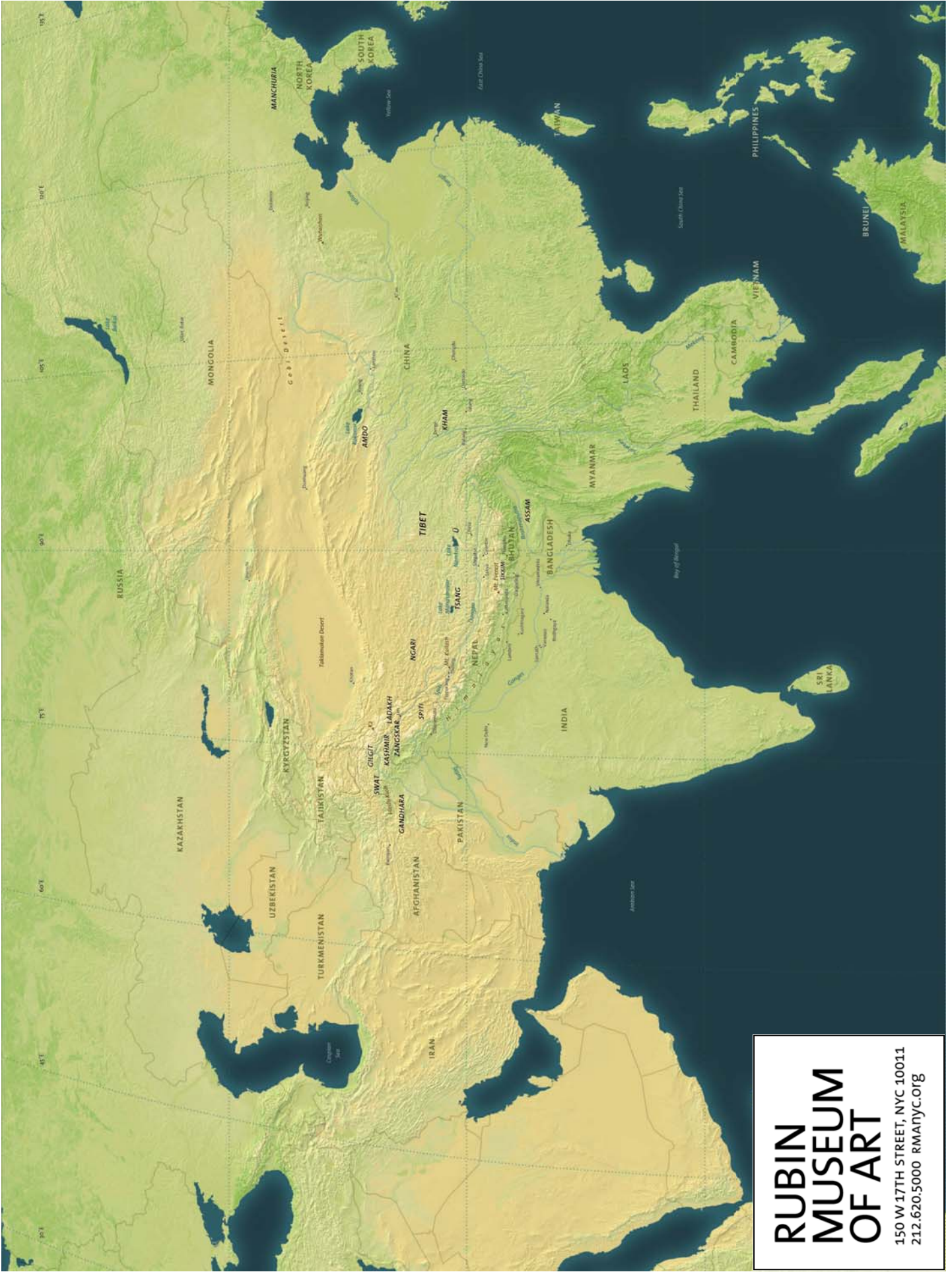
Search a virtual museum of high-resolution images, essays, articles, bibliographies, and activities for children.

Reading Resources for Further Learning

- Beer, Robert. *The Handbook of Tibetan Buddhist Symbols*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2003
- Leidy, Denise Patry. *The Art of Buddhism: An Introduction to its History and Meaning*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2008
- Powers, J. *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*. New York: Snow Lion Publications, 2007.
- Strong, J.S. *The Experience of Buddhism*. Belmont, C.A.: Wadsworth, 1995.

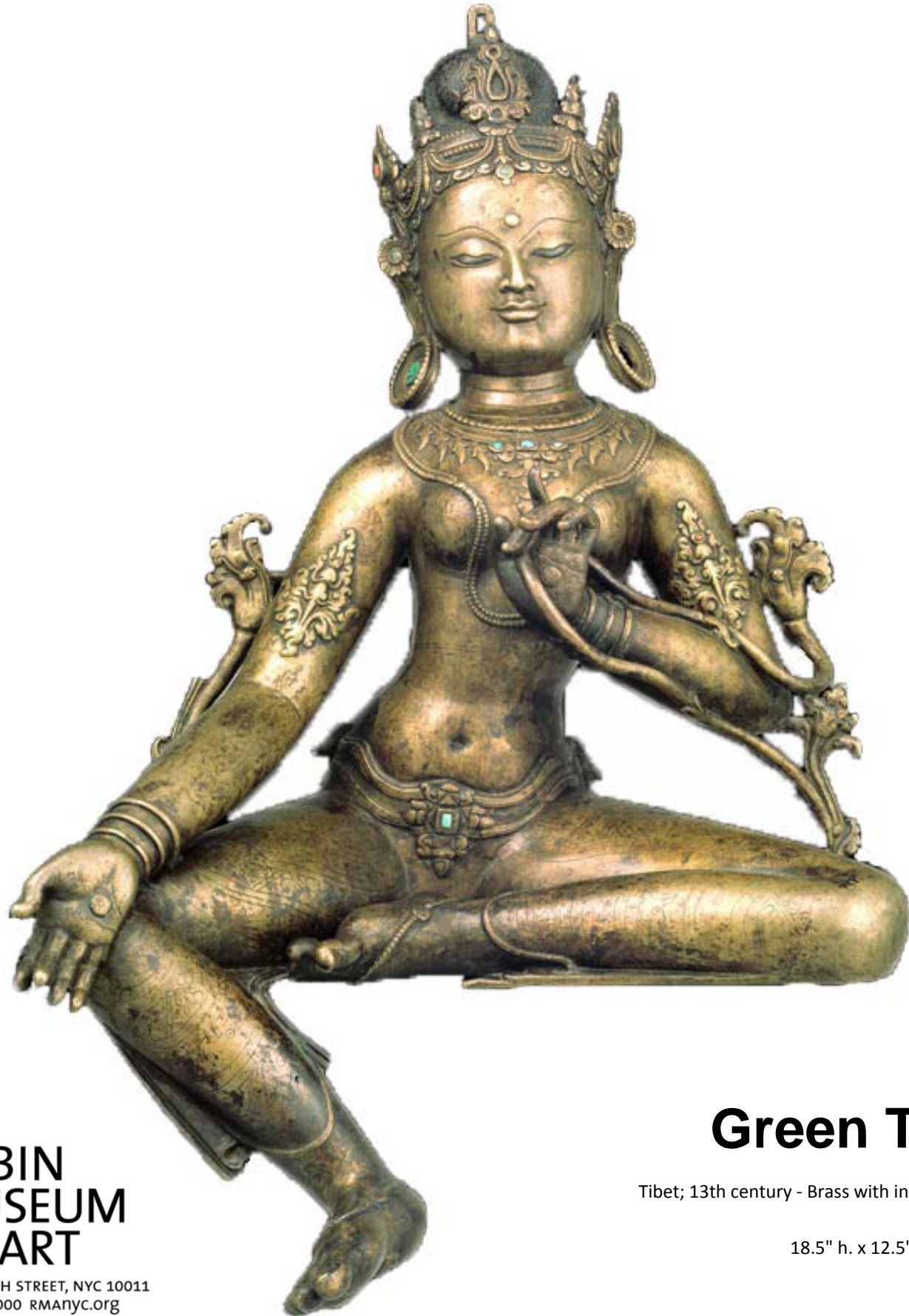
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Peaceful



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Green Tara

Tibet; 13th century - Brass with inlays of silver

18.5" h. x 12.5" w. x 9.5" d.

Wrathful



Begste

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Mongolia; late 18th-early 19th century - Gilt copper alloy with pigment

21" h. x 18.75" w. x 9.5" d.