

PRESS RELEASE

CONTEMPLATE THE EXPERIENCE OF PILGRIMAGE TO “SACRED SPACES” AT THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

Beginning November 17, 2017, contemporary works by Ghiora Aharoni and Arthur Liou focus on religious journeys for the benefit of one’s future self

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-  Experience pilgrimage and sacred journeys in “Sacred Spaces: The Road To...” @RubinMuseum: <http://rma.cm/29k>
-  Ghiora Aharoni and Arthur Liou’s works to be featured in “Sacred Spaces: The Road To...” opening 11/17: <http://rma.cm/29k>

New York, NY, September 25, 2017 — In the next iteration of its ongoing “Sacred Spaces” exhibition, the Rubin Museum of Art will invite visitors to confront contemporary artists’ perspectives on pilgrimage to holy sites. Featuring artist Ghiora Aharoni’s series “The Road to Sanchi” and two video works by artist Arthur Liou, the exhibition engages time as a medium and challenges viewers to consider the sacred and think about their own experiences with meaningful journeys. These installations continue the exhibition’s focus on devotional activities in awe-inspiring places. “Sacred Spaces: The Road To... and the Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room” opens November 17, 2017 and closes October 15, 2018.

Aharoni’s series of sculptures, which are being shown for the first time, reimagines vintage taxi meters, now obsolete, from India. Video screens embedded in the meters capture the artist’s rickshaw rides in India to sacred sites for Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and Buddhists. Each sculpture, whose form simultaneously references a time capsule and the silhouette of a stupa, becomes the oculus of a pilgrimage. At the Rubin, the installation takes the form of a crescent, designed as an invitation to the viewer to move through the space, to circumambulate the sculptures, and to create a connection to the work that is spatial as well as visual. The title “The Road to Sanchi” refers to one of the most important sites in Buddhism, which is famous for its Great Stupa built over relics of the Buddha. Sanchi and the other sacred sites are never seen in Aharoni’s videos, making the journeys a vehicle for examining the prism of time and the act of pilgrimage for the viewer. They also express India’s history of cultural plurality and the natural commingling of sacred and secular in India today.

“The pilgrimage ride embodies so much of the essence of India for me: the intersection of time and a confluence of realities, as well as an intrinsic plurality that has been indomitable. As exclusionist movements are gaining traction

internationally, it's an enduring intercultural paradigm that is extraordinarily inspiring for me," Aharoni said. "A pilgrimage allows us to experience time in a different way: this is a journey that's been taken by thousands, if not millions, of others—we're participating in a ritual which so many have done before us and so many will do after us. And at that moment, linear time collapses—the past, the present and the future all exist equally—and you shift into an alternative realm of time."

The videos "Kora" and "Saga Dawa," created by Arthur Liou, explore aspects of Tibetan Buddhist ritual and celebration as they take place in the breathtaking environment around Tibet's holiest mountain, Mount Kailash. Challenging the distinction between landscape, sacred site, and personal devotional practice, Liou's work invites the viewer to contemplate the significance of place in spiritual practice, and how pilgrimage cultivates intimacy with literal place, self-discovery, and the divine. The videos will be shown in succession, beginning with "Kora" on view through April 30.

In addition to its significance for Buddhists, Mount Kailash holds personal meaning for Liou, who journeyed to Tibet's sacred mountain to mourn following the loss of his daughter.

"Pilgrims believe that by circling Mount Kailash by way of an arduous 34 mile-long path, one can cleanse the sins of a lifetime. In the summer of 2011, I embarked on a four-week expedition to western Tibet, including a four-day kora around Kailash," Liou said. "The harsh elements and expansive landscape turned my thoughts inward. There was no immediate enlightenment, but gradual realization—that the pilgrimage is an external mirror to my solemn confrontation with past and future. The kora, as a circle, has no beginning or end."

Visitors can also take a pause inside the Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room, an immersive installation inspired by traditional Tibetan household shrines. The ongoing focal point of *Sacred Spaces* this time features the Sakya Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Filled with flickering butter lamps, the scent of incense, and the sounds of chanting, it conveys the feeling of a space that would be used for offering, devotion, prayer, and contemplation.

"A sacred space can be a physical place, but more importantly, it is an opportunity to step outside of daily routine and distraction, and contemplate what is resonant and meaningful," said Beth Citron, Curator, Modern and Contemporary Art at the Rubin.

As visitors explore the concept of spiritual journeys to affect future outcomes, they will also be invited to write letters to future museum visitors in a dedicated area in the gallery. A video interview with Aharoni and an interactive virtual Shrine Room will complement the exhibition online.

This exhibition is made possible by Bob and Lois Baylis, Matt and Ann Nimetz, Christopher J. Fussner, The 2009 Hoch Charitable Lead Trust, Tulku Tsultrim, and contributors to the 2017 Exhibitions Fund.

Sacred Spaces: The Road To... is organized by Beth Citron, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art; the Tibetan Buddhist Shrine Room is curated by Elena Pakhoutova, Curator of Himalayan Art; the design and installation are overseen by John Monaco, Head of Exhibition Design, all of the Rubin Museum.

About the Rubin Museum of Art

The Rubin Museum of Art is an arts oasis and cultural hub in New York City's vibrant Chelsea neighborhood that inspires visitors to make powerful connections between contemporary life and the art and ideas of the Himalayas, India, and neighboring regions. With a diverse array of thought-provoking exhibitions and programs—including films, concerts, and on-stage conversations—the Rubin provides immersive experiences that encourage personal discoveries and spark new ways of seeing the world. Emphasizing cross-cultural connections, the Rubin is a space to contemplate the big questions that extend across history and span human cultures.

About Ghiora Aharoni

Ghiora Aharoni's artworks are characterized by engaging time as a medium, and an interest in exploring dualities, such as the intersection of religion and science, the interconnectivity of cultural narratives and the intertwined relationships of seemingly disparate cultures. Much of his work involves text, traditional objects or symbols—such as cultural artifacts or sacred texts—that have been recontextualized and imbued with meaning that asks the viewer to question or reconsider their conventional social/cultural significance. A graduate of Yale University, his artwork and art installations have been exhibited in New York, Europe, Israel and India, including the solo exhibition, *Missives*, at the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Mumbai, India. His work is in the permanent collection of The Pompidou Center in Paris, as well as private collections in the U.S., Europe, Canada, Israel and India.

About Arthur Liou

Jawshing Arthur Liou creates video installations that depict spaces often improbable in reality. Working with both lens-based representation and digital post-production, he aims to transform recognizable imagery into realms of otherworldly experience. Liou's work has been featured in exhibitions and collections in the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, and Seoul Museum of Art. Liou is currently a Herman Wells Professor of Digital Art at Indiana University, Bloomington. His work is represented by Chiwen Gallery in Taipei.

About Beth Citron

Beth Citron is the Curator, Modern and Contemporary Art at the Rubin Museum of Art. Her exhibitions for the Rubin Museum have included "Henri Cartier-Bresson: India in Full Frame" (2017), "Genesis Breyer P-Orridge: Try to Altar Everything" (2016), "Francesco Clemente: Inspired by India" (2014), "Witness at a Crossroads: Photographer Marc Riboud in Asia" (2014), and the three part exhibition series "Modernist Art from India" (2011-13). She completed a Ph.D. in the History of Art at the University of Pennsylvania, and has taught in the Art History Department at New York University, from which she also earned a B.A. in Fine Arts.

THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 WEST 17TH STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10011
TELEPHONE 212 620 5000
WWW.RUBINMUSEUM.ORG

About Elena Pakhoutova

Elena Pakhoutova is Curator of Himalayan Art at the Rubin Museum of Art with a PhD in Asian Art History from the University of Virginia. Her background in Tibetan Buddhist studies contributes to her interdisciplinary approach to art history. Her research explores dialogues in the visual traditions of Inner Asia, art and ritual, art production and patronage, text and image, and narrative in Tibetan visual culture. Her other interests include cross-cultural exchange, material culture, and contemporary Tibetan art. At the Rubin Museum she has curated several exhibitions, including most recently the “Nepalese Seasons: Rain and Ritual” (2016), “All-Knowing Buddha: A Secret Guide” (2014) and “Collecting Paradise: Buddhist Art of Kashmir and Its Legacies” (2015).

Press Contact:

Robin Carol

Public Relations and Marketing Manager
Rubin Museum of Art
212-620-5000 x213
rcarol@rubinmuseum.org