Press Release
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For Immediate Release

Exhibition series Kaleidoscope of Burmese Art:
Celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the Center for Burma Studies
with components at the Northern Illinois University Art Museum

DeKalb, IL – This fall the Northern Illinois University Art Museum, in collaboration with the Center for Burma Studies, opens a major exhibition suite running August 23 through November 18, 2016 celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the Center for Burma Studies. Kaleidoscope of Burmese Art, a multiple exhibition series across campus, reflects Burmese art of the past and present and gives new perspective and focus to the array of multi-ethnic art produced in Burma/Myanmar. The exhibitions highlight the most iconic pieces from the Burma Art Collection—some never before publicly exhibited—as well as recent paintings by Burmese artists on loan from the Thukhuma Collection that illustrate current artistic practice in Myanmar within the past decade of dramatic political shifts and more recent social and cultural freedoms.

Join exhibition curator Dr. Catherine Raymond, Professor of Art History at the NIU School of Art and Design and Director of the Center for Burma Studies as she welcomes visitors with a lecture “Celebrating the Ten Flowers of Burmese Art,” an introduction to the exhibition suite in Altgeld Hall 315 on Thursday, September 8 at 5:00 p.m. Following the lecture, visitors may view the exhibitions and enjoy a Public Reception beginning at 5:30 p.m. at the NIU Art Museum’s Altgeld Hall first-floor galleries.

Dr. Raymond explains, “The exhibitions provide a conceptual way to understand and study the distinct objects in the collection and reassess the original context these objects were created within—a multicultural and multi-ethnic society which composes Myanmar today. While representing the past—through the donations of American diplomats, scholars or even simple explorers who have lived in Burma—the exhibitions also examine the transformations which occurred throughout Burma/Myanmar’s history. The suite surveys changes in Burmese traditional historic influences as well as external colonial pressures and the revolutionary upheaval to the present modern period’s recent democratic election of Aung San Suu Kyi.”

Like a prism or kaleidoscope, the exhibitions focus small, thematic presentations around the hidden treasures and masterpieces of the collection from various differing perspectives offering an exciting journey through the many Burmese cultures represented. The NIU Art Museum is pleased to host four of the seven exhibitions which will remain on display through November 18, 2016.

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About the four exhibitions at the NIU Art Museum
The NIU Art Museum will host four of the seven *Kaleidoscope of Burmese Art* exhibitions on campus in the Museum’s Altgeld galleries as well as present an engaging events calendar that includes informal gallery talks, scholarly lectures, tea and cuisine sampling, yoga and meditation practices, and a pre-Halloween children’s art making and scary story telling event.

*Journey Through Burmese Art* (South Galleries) is conceived as a tour through the Burma Art Collection, where visitors discover a long, fascinating, and varied textile tradition from some of the multiple ethnic groups that coexist in the Burmese territory. Next, one encounters various expressions of Buddhism as practiced in ancient and modern Burma/Myanmar and discovers a rich and elaborate altar displaying Buddhist images made of bronze, lacquer, and gilded wood and finds a special annex room featuring elaborately adorned chests to contain the sacred Buddhist texts. Here, one also meets donors and protective spirits and guardians, fantastic mythical beings that ward off evil and provide balance to the world. The next gallery on the journey presents traditional decorative design prior to and after the colonial period (1885-1948) and its multiple forms emanating from the “ten flowers of Burmese art” (the classic art forms of Myanmar) on silver, ivory, wood, bronze and paintings. The objects on display within this area illustrate the shift in design motifs towards the interests of the Western collector favoring “exotic” imagery such as workers in the paddy fields, the tropical forest, elephants, or views of sailing along the rivers. The journey ends as with a gracious visit where one would experience the luxurious use of lacquer in the ceremonial court as well as in daily life leaving the visitor with a rich and complex memory of this land and its art.

*Masterpieces from the Burma Art Collection at NIU* (North Gallery) is a selection of the most iconic artifacts at the heart and core of the Burma Art Collection including some of the founding pieces which were gifts from Konrad and Sarah Bekker. Konrad was a U.S. diplomat in Burma from 1958-1961 prior to the military regime (1962-2012); Sarah was the art lover and collector, and a founding member of the Center for Burma Studies.

*From Tradition to Modernity: Art from Myanmar as Viewed by Contemporary Burmese Artists* (Rotunda Gallery) presents recent paintings by Burmese artists on loan from the Thukhuma Collection in Hong Kong that reflect tradition as well as change—embracing a move toward modernity in the forms and influences of new media while continuing to reference traditional Burmese subjects. The inclusion of ancient artifacts from the collection alongside each painting invites a conversation around what has been a traditional Burmese way of life now transformed and being witnessed by the Myanmar artists today.

*Donors and Collectors: A Legacy* (Hallcase display) is a selection of objects from the Burma Art Collection celebrating a long history of donations by American citizens who have lived in Burma/Myanmar. Collectors of Burmese art were colonials and missionaries, but after independence in 1948, diplomats and scholars predominated American collecting. The interest each group took in Burmese society is often expressed through the kinds of objects collected.

Also on display on campus as part of the 30th Anniversary Celebration:
September 1 – October 27, 2016

*Painting Myanmar Today: A Selection from the Thukhuma Collection*
Olson Gallery, Jack Arends Hall 200, NIU School of Art and Design

*Unexpected Myanmar: Paw Oo Thet’s Watercolors*
Hallway Cases, 2nd Floor, Jack Arends Hall, NIU School of Art and Design
Opens October 1

*Exploring Calligraphy, Serigraphy, and Cartography in the Burmese Collections*
Founders Memorial Library, Southeast Asia Collection, 4th Floor

About the Kaleidoscope of Burmese Art exhibition suite
Artwork in these exhibitions are part of the Burma Art Collection at NIU, or on temporary loan from the Thukhuma Collection, Hong Kong. The exhibitions are curated by Dr. Catherine Raymond, Director, Center for Burma Studies with the assistance of NIU Museum Studies graduate students Carmin Berchiolly and Markie Striegel. *Painting Myanmar Today* was co-curated with Helen Nagata, Associate Professor, Art History, NIU.

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Associated Events and Educational Programs
More information about the exhibitions, events, and educational programming at the NIU Art Museum, many of which are free and open to the public, may be found online by visiting www.niu.edu/artmuseum.

Thursday, September 8
5:30-7 p.m., NIU Art Museum

Public Reception

Thursday, September 15
4:30-6 p.m., Olson Gallery, NIU School of Art and Design

Public Reception

5 p.m. “Is There Contemporary Art in Myanmar Today?” Gallery talk by Dr. Catherine Raymond

Sunday, September 18
Member’s Event, NIU Art Museum

By Invitation Only

Saturday, October 1
4:50-3:00 p.m., NIU Art Museum, Rotunda Gallery

“Buddhism in Practice: The Burmese Tradition of Meditation and Yoga”
Dr. Catherine Raymond with Cher Ladford, NIU alumna, Yoga Instructor at Breathe, DeKalb

Pre-Registration Required. Limit 20.

For questions or to register for the member’s event, children’s workshop or meditation/yoga session please phone 815-753-1936 or email the Education Coordinator shenn1@niu.edu.
Support provided by
The exhibitions and programs of the NIU Art Museum are sponsored in part by the Illinois Arts Council Agency; the Friends of the NIU Art Museum; and the Dean's Circle of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, NIU Foundation. Additional support for our Fall shows came from the Office of the President; the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovative Partnerships; the Olson Gallery, The Elizabeth Allen Visiting Scholars in Art History Fund, the Art History Division at NIU, the Visiting Artist and Scholar Fund of the School of Art and Design; the International Studies Program at NIU, the Center for Southeast Asia Studies; the Friends of the Library; and the Center for Burma Studies.

About the Center for Burma Studies
The Center for Burma Studies (CBS), established at Northern Illinois University in 1986, is the world’s sole academic center combining teaching, research and art collections dedicated to Burmese studies. From its inception, a primary objective of the CBS has been the creation of a comprehensive archive of artistic and cultural materials essential to the academic study of Burma/Myanmar, while providing free access for classroom instruction and research at the NIU campus and for wider use in scholarship throughout the United States and the rest of the world.

About the NIU Art Museum
The NIU Art Museum contributes to the University's educational curriculum and provides opportunities for art education and cultural enrichment throughout the community. The Museum serves to educate, preserve, exhibit, and enlighten by balancing the challenges of contemporary art with the riches of traditional media for a comprehensive examination of visual culture.

Gallery Hours
Tuesday through Friday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Saturday 12 noon – 4 p.m.; or by appointment for group tours. Exhibitions are open to the public and admission is FREE, but donations are always appreciated.

The NIU Art Museum is located on the first floor, west end of Altgeld Hall, located on the corner of College Avenue and Castle Drives on the main campus of Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL. Parking is available in the Carroll Avenue Visitor's Pay Lot; handicapped and metered spots in front of Altgeld Hall; and during public receptions and programs in Lot 3 northeast of Gilbert Drive and College Avenue. Campus parking is free on weekends and after 5 p.m. weeknights.
Additional Images

Above Left to Right:
Detail of manuscript chest, set on a stair step platform, Burma/Myanmar, wood, lacquer, gilded, paint. Gift of John A. Lacey.
Detail of silver bowl depicting scenes from the Ramayana poem, Burma/Myanmar, silver, (approx. 7 x 9 in.). Gift of John A. Lacey.

Below Left to Right:
Bilu, Burma/Myanmar, Carved wood, lacquer, mirror inlay, (35 x 12 x 18 in.) Burma Art Collection, Gift of Konrad and Sarah Bekker.
Zwe Mon, untitled, 2013, Acrylic on canvas, (48 x 36 in.). On loan from the Thukhuma Collection.

High-resolution images will be sent as a separate attachment upon request.

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