his catalog presents gilded sculpture, bejeweled ceremonial objects, vivid paintings and contemporary Asian works that embody some of the manifestations of Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of compassion. Known in China as Guanyin, Kwannon in Korea, Kannon in Japan and Chenrezig in Tibet, this ubiquitous Buddhist deity is dedicated to the wellbeing of humanity. For almost two millennia Avalokiteshvara’s form, symbolism and gender have changed. A meditation on Buddhist history, imagery and practice, this exhibition illustrates that the artist’s hand has been a powerful part of Buddhist faith, and that our desire for compassion is universal.
Whether one believes in a religion or not, and whether one believes in rebirth or not, there isn’t anyone who doesn’t appreciate kindness and compassion.

Dalai Lama XIV
This catalog is published in conjunction with the exhibition *Infinite Compassion: Avalokiteshvara in Asian Art* organized by the Staten Island Museum at Snug Harbor Cultural Center in collaboration with the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, October 22, 2016 - September 24, 2017.

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Back cover, from left: *Four-armed Avalokiteshvara or Shadakshari Lokeshvara, 18th - 19th century; Eleven-headed Avalokiteshvara, 17th - 18th century; Green Tara, 18th century. Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art*

Opposite: *Cat 9 Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñaparamita) Sutra Manuscript, Tibet, c. late 13th - 14th century*

Fonts: Khmer UI, Mongolian Baiti, Minion Pro

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*Curator of Art, Staten Island Museum*

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n September 2015 the Staten Island Museum expanded, and with this growth has come rediscoveries. We have uncovered works long dormant in storage, and have begun to bring them out into our new, LEED gold-certified, climate-controlled facility at Snug Harbor, the only green museum on Staten Island. Works from all over the globe have emerged. In this process we also look back and appreciate the ambitious exhibitions that were held in our smaller facility at 75 Stuyvesant Place, when works of art were loaned from major institutions and private collectors without the anxieties of climate control and best practices that now face all museums. With the opening of Infinite Compassion, we are resuming our place as an institution that can present loaned works of art and spotlight a sister museum — the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art. At the same time, this exhibition promotes the concept that compassion is a virtue of which the world can never have enough.

Infinite Compassion was the brainchild of our former President and CEO, Elizabeth Egbert, who dreamed not only of our new facility and saw it to its realization, but steadfastly held the vision that the Staten Island Museum should foster collaboration with other institutions on the Island. We continue to pursue Elizabeth’s vision as our own, and will expand upon it in ways that, perhaps, even she could not anticipate. As the only actively collecting general interest museum in New York City, the Staten Island Museum has a broad mandate, which we celebrate and in which we take great delight, while we continue to respond to the exciting developments in our community.

We are honored not only to host this exhibition of pan-Asian art but also to welcome the participation of Dr. Patricia Eichenbaum Karetzky, our guest curator, who has authored books on Buddhist art and architecture and on Avalokiteshvara, in particular. Her expertise makes this Bodhisattva of Compassion accessible to non-Buddhists as well as to practitioners.

Ultimately we hope that visitors will relish the beauty of these objects and we all will come away inspired by the spirit of compassion that they embody.

Cheryl Adolph
Executive Director & CEO
Staten Island Museum
Jacques Marchais (1887-1948) was a remarkable American woman who amassed one of the finest collections of Tibetan Buddhist art in the early 20th century. In 1919, she and her husband, Harry Klauber, moved to the Lighthouse Hill section of Staten Island because, according to her diary, she wanted a farm within commuting distance of the city. Shortly after moving to Staten Island, she acquired the vacant property adjacent to her home where she constructed two Himalayan-style buildings that form the basis of the Jacques Marchais Center of Tibetan Art.

Jacques Marchais intended to create an institution that would provide Westerners with a greater understanding of Tibet, and through this understanding become more tolerant of one another. Having lived through both World Wars and the Great Depression, Marchais wanted her Center to serve as a place of retreat and as a bridge between Tibetan culture and the West.

Today we continue to carry out the vision of Jacques Marchais through exhibitions, public programs, and presentations. Items from our collection have been on view in Philadelphia, Poughkeepsie, Walden, New York, and abroad in London. We are thrilled both to add the Staten Island Museum to these venues and to see so many objects from our collection featured in Infinite Compassion. Our collaborative exhibition brings together several fine collections of Tibetan and Asian art and illustrates the universal theme of compassion.

The Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art would like to thank Dr. Patricia Karetzky for her scholarly contributions to this exhibition and its catalogue. We also would like to thank Cheryl Adolph and the exhibition-and-program team at the Staten Island Museum for taking this exhibition from concept to reality.

His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama, a reincarnation of the Tibetan Bodhisattva Chenrezig, said, Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive. It is our hope that the exhibition Infinite Compassion will contribute to the larger conversation of compassion in everyday life and that we can all learn from other cultures.
acknowledgments

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Mr. Losang Gyatso
Infinite Compassion is an art exhibition of images that embodies the concept of compassion, but its scope is much larger — it aims to encourage us to meditate on our capacity as human beings to care about each other selflessly in thought and deed. Devoted to the Buddhist deity of compassion, the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, Infinite Compassion, celebrates several innovations in Staten Island’s cultural landscape. Beginning in September 2015, the Staten Island Museum presented much of its art collection in a newly renovated, climate-controlled building of historic and architectural distinction, joining other institutions on the grounds of Snug Harbor Cultural Center. Founded in 1881, the Staten Island Museum is the Island’s oldest continuously flourishing cultural institution. This exhibition, a collaboration between the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art and the Staten Island Museum, offers us a greater understanding of Asian culture and a bridge between Buddhist values and the West. Our collaboration coincides with the Staten Island Museum’s rediscovery of its own Asian art treasures, some displayed in the Museum’s Treasure Box Gallery that showcases art from around the world, and now appear in this catalogue. The Museum’s collection includes works from India, Nepal, Vietnam, China, Korea, Japan, and Tibet. Textiles, paintings, prints, ceramics, sculpture, and decorative arts will rotate periodically, so that visitors can experience more of them.

The Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art was the brainchild of one woman of extraordinary vision and foresight. Jacques Marchais brought an obscure culture and its religion to the attention of people at a time when this was rarely done. In fact, the Jacques Marchais Museum, which opened in 1947, is the first museum of art in the entire country to focus exclusively on Himalayan art and it does so in a contextual way. Although the flora and fauna of Lighthouse Hill are completely different from those of Tibet, the hilltop retreat of the Tibetan Museum, set in lush gardens, has Tibetan-style monastic structures. Within one discovers altars filled with gleaming statuary, set up much as you would see in a Tibetan lamasery. Visiting the Museum is an adventure — an experience both of literal and spiritual ascent. One of the goals of the Tibetan Museum is to make the collection available to a wider global audience. This exhibition brings together facilities and collections from both museums, giving viewers a greater understanding of Himalayan religion and its meanings.

Adding to the resources presented by Jacques Marchais and Staten Island Museum, the Rubin Museum of Art, the Godwin-Ternbach Museum, Queens College, and private collectors, have loaned objects to this survey of images of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Infinite Compassion celebrates the Asian immigrants and their descendants who live on Staten Island. The Chinese, Korean, and Indian populations keep pace with their growth throughout Greater New York. Staten Island’s Sri Lankan community is the largest in the United States. First, second, and, even third generations of Asian Americans make this borough their home. The art in this exhibition reflects the honored traditions of its place of origin. Today a broad range of people can value them, for exhibitions like this one promote cross-cultural understanding.
Many of the numerous manifestations of Avalokiteshvara, the Asian incarnation of infinite compassion are presented in this exhibition, Infinite Compassion, and many of the objects come from Tibet where Avalokiteshvara or Chenrezig, is the most important deity. Since medieval times, the Dalai Lama has been understood as the incarnation of this benevolent deity who is dedicated to the well-being of humanity. Worship of Avalokiteshvara has its origins in ancient India and the teachings of the Buddha.

Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Infinite Compassion
Patricia Eichenbaum Karetzky, Ph.D.

The Rise of Buddhism
Sixth Century BCE - First Century BCE

The story of the Buddha begins thousands of years ago in a small kingdom in the foothills of the Himalayas. No historical records exist, but tradition holds that Buddha was born around the 6th century BCE. A gifted princeling, he was treated to every luxury and excelled in all endeavors. Despite his life of ease, where he was sheltered from all adversity, he left the palace on four fateful trips. On each of these excursions, he encountered the frailties of existence—old age, sickness, death, and a Brahmin ascetic living in the forest practicing austerities. Moved to disillusionment with the transient pleasures of palace life, the prince Siddhartha left home to practice with the sages in the forest. Six fruitless years later, he realized the path of pain, like the path of pleasure, was of no help in the search for peace. After a bath in a nearby river, a change of clothes, and a meal, he sat under a broad leafy tree resolved to find the meaning of life. Through the night he had four realizations, known as The Four Noble Truths—all life is painful; the cause of pain is attachment; the means to the cessation of pain is the destruction of attachments, and the way to release was the Eightfold-Path, which entailed meditative and moral discipline. With the rising sun, he was enlightened.

For 500 years Buddhism rejected the outside world to follow a life modeled on this sage of the Shakya clan, Shakyamuni Buddha. Lay followers, who could not live the life of a monk, supported monastic communities earning spiritual merit toward their eventual birth as a monk.
and the path to enlightenment. The first emperor of India, King Asoka (c. 268 to 10232 BCE.), who was converted on the field of battle, made Buddhism the state religion and built a multitude of stone monuments honoring the Buddha. Asoka also sent emissaries, including his son and daughter, to bring Buddhism to surrounding kingdoms like Sri Lanka and Nepal. Asoka ruled in a conspicuously humane manner, honoring all religious traditions, not just Buddhism. This king, ruling his empire under the aegis of Buddhism, became the model for other kings throughout the east.

From the first Buddhism was unusual for it was a religion of conversion. To this day one cannot truly convert to another widely practiced eastern religion, Hinduism. Beginning with the Buddhist disciples, monks traveled the world, bringing the teachings to near and distant realms of Asia. Religious practices included the earliest form of worship—pilgrimages to the places important in the life of the Buddha and worship at the architectural monument of the stupa (Cat.2).

The stupa was a mound of earth that marked the grave of dead kings, heroes, and local gods in ancient India, whose ashes were placed in a small container, buried deep in the ground, and covered by a mound of earth. A wooden mast reached from the reliquary to the top of the dome, terminating in a small square railing and a series of umbrellas.

Originally funeral monuments, stupas were also built to commemorate the Buddha. Worshippers erected stupas, which are known by a variety of names throughout the Buddhist world, including pagoda, chorten, dagoba, and more. Buddhists circumambulate the structure three times in a clockwise manner while meditating on the Buddha. This earliest form of Buddhism did not have images of the Buddha as foci of devotions; instead, symbols were used, such as the Bodhi tree under which Buddha had his enlightenment. Other symbols included the lotus blossom, an empty throne, wheels, and footprints. Later, images of the Buddha evolved, along with specific characteristics that marked him as the Buddha.

Buddhism is a dynamic religion that underwent many transformations both in India and abroad. These changes were due to several distinctive characteristics. At first the scriptures were orally transmitted; not until 500 years after the death of the Buddha were they translated and written down under Kushan patrons. By this time there was no single canon of teachings. Unlike the Holy Bible, the sacred corpus of texts was not closed, and scriptures continued to enter into the canon so that they number in the thousands. Buddhist teachings are not

**Mahayana Buddhism and the Appearance of the Bodhisattva**

First Century BCE-Ninth Century CE

Around the 1st Millennium, the Kushans, northern nomadic people of Central Asia, invaded northern India and Pakistan, known in ancient times as Gandhara. Several Kushan kings were avid Buddhist patrons. Not bound by local tradition and exposed to a variety of cultural influences that traveled the Silk Route on which they were prominently located, these kings were free to dramatically change Buddhism and its art. Most notably was the introduction of a pantheon of savior deities to aid the faithful. The new deities included the Bodhisattva: a spiritually evolved being who defers his own nirvana, or the cessation of reincarnations, to help humankind. A text from about the 1st century, the Lotus Sutra, one of the most important scriptures in Asia, has several chapters that extol the virtues of a number of Bodhisattvas, primary among them is Avalokiteshvara, whose name has been translated as "he who looks down" (on the sufferings of the world). This Bodhisattva of Compassion first appears as an attendant deity to the Buddha of the Western Paradise, Amitabha, a new teaching that promises rebirth in the west to all who call on him. In this role Avalokiteshvara is the guide of the soul, or the soul catcher at the time of death. Eventually, worship of Avalokiteshvara achieved independence and dominated all other deities. The *Lotus Sutra* explains that this god will save the faithful from a number of perils by just calling on him. To accomplish this goal, Avalokiteshvara will assume any form.

Thirty-three manifestations listed in the scriptures include assuming the appearance of a demon, guardian deity, merchant, woman, and many other forms. The fluidity of the deity’s persona is an important characteristic in his subsequent development and in the multifarious ways he is portrayed. This sutra identifies the deity as the lotus holder, Padmapani, and typically, there is a small Buddha in his crown, referring to his association with Amitabha (Cat.4).

Buddhism is a dynamic religion that underwent many transformations both in India and abroad. These changes were due to several distinctive characteristics. At first the scriptures were orally transmitted; not until 500 years after the death of the Buddha were they translated and written down under Kushan patrons. By this time there was no single canon of teachings. Unlike the Holy Bible, the sacred corpus of texts was not closed, and scriptures continued to enter into the canon so that they number in the thousands. Buddhist teachings are not
The Manifestations of Avalokiteshvara

The earliest description of Avalokiteshvara appears in Chapter XXIV of the Lotus Sutra, or Saddharmapundarika Sutra, literally Sutra on the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma, compiled around the 1st century in India or Central Asia. In it the dangers from which the faithful will be saved if they call on the Bodhisattva are delineated.

Hearing, seeing, regularly and constantly thinking will infallibly destroy all suffering, (mundane) existence, and grief of living beings here on earth.

If one be thrown into a pit of fire, by a wicked enemy with the object of killing him, he has but to think of Avalokiteshvara, and the fire shall be quenched as if sprinkled with water.

The scripture goes on to enumerate various perils: falling into the dreadful ocean; hurled down from the brink of a mountain; (threatened by) rocks of thunderstone and thunderbolts; surrounded by a host of enemies armed with swords; execution: shackled with wood or iron; subject to mighty spells, witchcraft, herbs, ghosts; surrounded by goblins, demons, ghosts, or giants; threatened by fearful beasts with sharp teeth and claws; besieged by malicious and frightful snakes, heavy thunderbolts shot from a cloud pregnant with lightning and thunder.

He (Avalokiteshvara) with his powerful knowledge beholds all creatures who are beset with many hundreds of troubles and afflicted by many sorrows, and thereby is a savior in the world, including the gods...

Birth, decrepitude, and disease will come to an end for those who are in the wretched states of existence, in hell, in brute creation, in the kingdom of Yama, for all beings (in general).

Lotus Sutra Chapter XXIV: (texts.com/bud/lotus/lot24.htm)

The image of the Bodhisattva resembles an Indian prince, with long hair trailing his shoulders, ample jewelry—necklaces, armlets, bracelets, earrings, and a crown, naked to the waist wearing a dhoti, a cloth wrapped as a skirt, thin scarves, and jeweled sandals.
Although a number of individual Bodhisattvas existed in ancient India, their individual identity through the application of attributes was not standardized until the Guptan Era in the 4th to 6th centuries CE. A common portrayal of Avalokiteshvara shows a standing princely figure holding a lotus in his left hand (Cat 6). He wears a small Buddha in his crown, and his head is inclined as if he were looking down at the devotee. His right arm extends down, often offering sanctified water to the hungry ghosts in hell. In a more complicated format, small-scale depictions of the perils—attacked by animals, by bandits, in jail, in hell, and other dangers—surround the large-size icon. The Bodhisattva also appears seated in the posture of princely ease, the Lalitasana, his right leg bent at the knee and resting on his left knee (Cat 14). As the scripture further explained, this savior will take on any form to help the faithful and it enumerated Thirty-three Manifestations, including average human, guardian king, woman, demon, and other forms. Thus there are a great many ways in which Avalokiteshvara is depicted.

With changes in the teachings in the 8th century, a number of new icons evolved. These forms materially present the expanded powers of Avalokiteshvara by adding numerous arms and heads. Vajrayana scriptures describe these new manifestations and the great saving power of the Bodhisattva; they tell of standing eleven-headed and four, six, eight and thousand-armed forms (Cat 11). In each of the thousand hands is an attribute representing his awesome powers, which include the scriptures, the lotus, the rosary, the water jar with the waters of immortality, the wish-fulfilling Cintamani jewel, weapons, and other attributes. Icons may be seated in the princely pose. The Eleven-headed, Thousand-armed form became very popular in the Far East and Tibet. So beloved is this form in Japan that a 12th-century Kyoto temple, the Sanjusangen-do, has 1001 sculptural representations on its altar.

Tantric deities are also distinguished by female embodiments of their spirit, their shakti. So, too, Avalokiteshvara acquires female attendants. Tara, his feminine counterpart, similarly represents compassion. According to one well-known legend, a tear from the eye of Avalokiteshvara formed a lake, out of which rose a lotus flower. As the petals opened, the goddess Tara appeared. Often in small
scale, she is seated in the lower area of a large stone stele. In later Tantric art Tara becomes an independent deity, shown as a voluptuous princess, bejeweled and holding the lotus flower. She too might assume the posture of princely leisure (Cat. 19). In Tibet Tara holds a particularly important role and has 21 manifestations. In addition, Tantric deities include terrifying manifestations of Avalokiteshvara with angry faces, glaring eyes, sharp fangs, and a crown of skulls (Cat. 25). In their many hands they hold multiple weapons. Such imagery challenges the dualist notion of evil and good, for everything is the Buddha, even the negative forces of the universe. These gruesome incarnations also feature importantly as guardian figures.

Avalokiteshvara’s Gender Identity

Cultural differences abound in the conception and portrayal of Avalokiteshvara and one of the most striking is the gender of the Bodhisattva. As a transcendent being, the Bodhisattva is theoretically without gender, however from the earliest portrayals he was shown as male. Beginning with illustrations of the Thirty-three Manifestations, Avalokiteshvara, or Guanyin in Chinese, occasionally assumes a female form. By the Song Dynasty (960-1279) in China, female representations become increasingly popular. The role of Guanyin as granter of children and their protector led to a burgeoning of feminine icons. Often small children surround her or, when seated, she holds a child on her lap, resembling the Christian Madonna (Cat. 23).
Avalokiteshvara is often depicted at home in Mount Potalaka. For the Chinese it is the mountain island of Puto in southeast China, the Zhoushan prefecture of Zhejiang province. There the Bodhisattva, attended by the Jade Maiden and the Golden Boy, lives in a cave overlooking the sea, surrounded by verdant mountains (Cat. 27). By the Ming Era (1368-1644) most Buddhist temples feature a large-scale representation of the mountain-island home on the back of the main altar. There the Bodhisattva sits aloft in the posture of princely leisure, in front of a panorama of craggy rocks inhabited by mystical creatures. The Lotus Sutra, one of the most important scriptures in Buddhism, contains a chapter on Guanyin. With the invention of wood-block printing in China by the 9th century, illustrated excerpts about Guanyin were available for sale at temples. The faithful also purchased small icons fashioned from a variety of materials for household altars (Cat. 28). White glazed porcelain figurines, Blanc de Chine, like those from the Dehua kilns in Fujian Province, show the figure standing among the waves of the sea, with her garments aflutter. Sometimes a fish jumps out of the surrounding water. In rural China it was not uncommon for a woman of extreme virtue to be seen as a manifestation of the Bodhisattva and she and her hometown won honor.

Avalokiteshvara in Tibet

For Tibetans, Chenrezig (Avalokiteshvara) is supremely important—the Dalai Lama is an incarnation of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, returning in each life to that location until all creatures have reached salvation. The main temple in Lhasa, the Potala Palace, is a recreation of Avalokiteshvara’s celestial mountain island home. As adherents of Tantric or Vajrayana Buddhism, Tibetans practice an extremely complicated form of Buddhism, and this is nowhere more evident than in the numerous manifestations of the Bodhisattva. Avalokiteshvara appears as a beautiful bejeweled prince, as a furious deity with a horrific visage, and as the beautiful goddess Tara, among other manifestations.

Tibet, a plateau surrounded by some of the tallest mountains on earth and by vast deserts, is a remote land. Because of its geography, it is divided into regions, and each has a distinctive form of Buddhist practice and source of influence. For example, the western region, which was the earliest to accept Buddhism, is in contact with Indian, Nepalese and, Kashmiri schools, while the east is within the Chinese sphere of influence. The earliest myth of the adoption of Buddhism reflects the situation: King Songtsen Gampo (r. 629-650), who unified Tibet, married both a Chinese and a Nepalese princess, and each brought Buddha images and teachings with her. Songtsen Gampo also had the Potala Palace constructed in 641-50. In 840-842, Buddhism fell into disfavor and was forbidden but it survived in Guge in the western regions. In the 10th century, King Yeshe Od of the Guge kingdom sent monks to Kashmir to learn more about the teachings, bringing the eminent master Atisa back with
Mandalas

Mandalas are portrayals of the divinities of the cosmic realm. They are also a focus of worship and a distinctive format associated with Vajrayana Buddhist practice. Architectonic structures of superimposed geometric shapes, they map out the sacred universe. Though often rendered on two-dimensional surfaces, they are read as three-dimensional. This design is also adopted for the plans of architectural structures and three-dimensional sculptures. Usually the most important deity is at the center, ranged around are secondary and increasingly lesser deities. Sometimes the center is occupied by the cosmic Mount Sumeru, surrounded by a wall with four entrances to the cardinal directions, the seven seas and seven mountains, and four earthly realms. Deities inhabit the summit. Other mandalas include a number of smaller mandalas; still others focus on a single deity or patriarch, sometimes seated in a mountain landscape. Tibetan mandala paintings are oriented to the four directions with their symbolic representations in the four corners. Some portray the wheel of reincarnation. Always brilliantly colored, they often have a black or red background. Everything associated with the form has a symbolic meaning, including the colors. Painted on walls inside and outside the temples, mandalas are also created in portable materials and on special occasions mandalas are executed in sand, a time-consuming and ephemeral ritual that ends with its deconstruction and blessings.

Avalokiteshvara, as the supreme deity, appears in multifarious ways. He can be portrayed as a beautiful prince. There is also the Water Moon form, which refers to his home in Potala — the moon is the halo for the seated Bodhisattva; nearby is a jar containing a willow branch. As Amoghapasa, Avalokiteshvara holds a lasso, which he uses to capture worshippers and guide them to spiritual clarity. As Cintamanichakra he holds the wish fulfillment jeweled wheel, or cintamani. Hayagriva, or horse-necked Avalokiteshvara, has six arms, three heads, and a horsehead that represents protection and compassion. He presides over rebirth and protects animals. Avalokiteshvara Khasarpana is often shown offering nectar to the hungry ghosts in hell. This exhibition has examples of the eleven-headed, thirteen-headed, four-armed and thousand-armed types. In addition are the

Among the vast array of icons, the historic Buddha or Shakyamuni retains his importance as founder and teacher. In addition to icons, there are narratives of his life story. The role of an enlightened teacher, or lama, is prominent in Tibet. Like the Buddha, such teachers are highly realized spiritual beings. They may be reincarnations of previous lamas, and at the same time an emanation of a deity and the founder of an important lineage. Representations of lamas had sacred inscriptions indicating that a living spirit remained in them. Others incorporated the lama's handprints or even their cremated ashes. The deification of sages was in accord with the pre-Buddhist Tibetan shamanistic religion that venerated leaders as divine and employed a variety of ritual implements. Such traditions were easily absorbed into Buddhist art.

Mandalas

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terrible manifestations: a six-armed, Hayagriva with three angry glaring faces, fierce fangs, and a crown of skulls, and his eight feet stand on demonic representations, Naga, of impediments to enlightenment.

In Tibet the female incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, Tara, is beloved by all lineages (Cat 19, Cat 20). Atisa, the Indian monk who traveled to Tibet in the mid-11th century, promoted her worship. He translated a number of scriptures, among which was Scriptural Homages to the 21 Forms of Tara. In another, he proclaims his faith:

I bow to her, to this one whom we need only remember to be free from all the great perils... having bowed to her, I will describe her. Listen, then, my child to her sadhana...on her right side she (displays the gesture of) a deity that grants all wishes, at the same time her left hand holds a lotus...She has a single face, a beautiful countenance, and the appearance of fresh youth... She sits in the half-lotus position (and from this seat) will protect the three worlds.

Arya Tara Ashtabhyaya
Trata nama Sadhana

Most beloved are the Green and White Taras. White Tara embodies maternal compassion and offers healing to the hurt or wounded. Gedun Drupa (1391-1474), the First Dalai Lama, offered Homage to White Tara:

Radiant as the eternal snows in all their glory,
She sits on a white lotus and a silvery moon
Indicating fully developed compassion and knowledge.
Homage to the Youthful One with full breasts,
One face and two arms.
Sitting in Vajra position,
She regally displays both grace and calm
And is filled with great bliss.

Green Tara offers succor and protection from all difficult circumstances. Red Tara teaches discrimination and how to transform desire into compassion. Blue Tara embodies a ferocious, wrathful energy that destroys obstacles and brings good luck and enlightenment. No matter the manifestation, Tara is always the essential embodiment of compassion and protection.

Cat 22 Losang Gyatso. Clearlight Tara, 2011
Cat 30 Jeweled Plaque with Nina Buddhist Deities. Nepal, 17th - 19th centuries
Cat 21 Tashi Dhargyal. White Tara, 2008 and detail
Contemporary Art

In 1951, China took political control of Tibet and eight years later the Dalai Lama and his retinue fled to India. With help from the Indian government, they set up a political, religious, and social center in Dharamsala, in northern India. Many more Tibetans followed. Contemporary Tibetan artists, whether diaspora-living in the west or those who remain at home, continue to make art, maintaining the traditions of the past. Some persist in closely following the traditions of creating thangkas, or Tibetan religious paintings. After a long and arduous apprenticeship, they master the complicated symbolic forms and materials (Cat. 40, Cat. 45). Such works retain their religious meaning. Other diaspora artists, exposed to the art of the west, seek ways to bridge their native traditions with contemporary styles, media, palette, and materials. In this way, too, the gods of ancient Tibet continue to be represented. They may transform Buddhist visual vocabulary by resituating it in a modern context; by combining it with contemporary imagery; including traditional decorative patterns or painting with brilliant colors. These artists create new ways of experiencing the old familiar images. In addition to the traditional media of painting and sculpture, they make photographs, installation, and video art. Often their works express the bitterness of the Chinese occupation of Tibet, their frustration with the current political situation, and isolation from their native country. Contemporary Tibetan artists living abroad often concentrate on the image of the Dalai Lama, the embodiment of Avalokiteshvara, who has kept the teachings alive while living in exile.

Tibetan Buddhism is a living religion accepted around the globe. The loving compassion of the current Dalai Lama has brought the doctrine of infinite compassion to this care-ridden world.

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catalogue of the exhibition
1  *Bust of Jacques Marchais*
Waylande Gregory (American, 1905-1971), 1945
Glazed ceramic with turquoise, carnelian, malachite, lapis lazuli and moonstones
26 x 18 x 9 inches
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, JMA2016.1282

This bust was unveiled in 1945 at the opening of Jacques Marchais Library. Waylande Gregory, a well-known American ceramicist, modeled Jacques Marchais as a Tantric goddess. He turned her voluminous blonde hair into leaping flames, studded with 12 turquoise pieces, and crowned with a small Buddha, now missing. On her shoulders, he incorporated images of Green and White Taras, the legendary Chinese and Nepali wives of King Songsten Gampo (c. 617-650 CE), who is credited with introducing Buddhism in Tibet.

2  *Stupa*
Gandhara, 2nd century
Schist bas-relief, 16 x 16 inches
Private Collection

The stupa, a monument that marks the burial place of the Buddha’s relics, is based on a native honorific earth mound. The dome rests on a cylindrical and/or square base with crowning elements of a small square railing and umbrellas that mark the presence of divinity. Stupas containing relics of saintly people are found throughout the Buddhist world and mark nearly every sacred site.

3  *Standing Buddha*
Gandhara, 2nd century
Schist, 10 x 4 inches
Private Collection

Five hundred years after Buddha’s death, artists began to create images of him, using both native and Greco-Roman characteristics to indicate his special marks, or laksana: a cranial protrusion, elongated ears, and a wart symmetrically placed between the brows (there are 32 markers of a “great man” and 80 secondary characteristics). The Buddha wears monastic dress—three pieces of uncolored cloth as a skirt, shirt, and a shawl. A Persian solar disc, or halo, marks his enlightenment.

4  *Seated Bodhisattva*
Gandhara, c. 1st - 3rd century
Stone, 24 1/2 x 16 x 7 3/4 inches
Gift of Nathan V. Hammer
Godwin-Ternbach Museum and Other Collections, Queens College, CUNY  [60.22]

Around the first century CE divine helpers were introduced into Buddhism. Called Bodhisattvas, they postpone their enlightenment to save others. The embodiment of wisdom and compassion, Bodhisattvas look like Indian princes, with long hair and multiple jewels, a cloth winds around their lower bodies, and scarves, jeweled sandals, and a halo marks their special status.

Origins of Buddhism
FIGURINE OF A STANDING BOSATSU

Japan, Heian period, c. 794-1185
Wood with metal ornaments, and gilt 25 3/4 x 7 1/2 inches
Gift of Nathan V. Hammer
Godwin-Ternbach Museum and Other Collections, Queens College (67.149)

5 Figurine of a Standing Bosatsu

The Japanese, considering trees divine, are consummate sculptors of wood. This small Bosatsu (or Bodhisattva) has the refined features and delicate proportions of court art of the Heian era. Cascading ribbons float down its sides, enlivening the figure’s silhouette. Finely wrought gilt and metal ornaments further embellish the icon.

6 AVALOKITESHWARA TRIAD

Bihar, Pala Dynasty, c. 10-12th century
Chloritic shist, 23 x 13 inches
Private Collection

The Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara is identifiable by the small Buddha in his crown. Here he has six arms, one broken, that hold various attributes: on the right they hold a jar containing the waters of immortality, a lotus flower of purity, and in the right hands are a rosary for meditation, the gesture of Fear Not (palm facing out) and charity (arm hanging down, palm facing out). Two stupas flank the upper part, and two haloed female attendents flank his feet.

7 STUPA

Southeast Asia (Thailand), date unknown
Gilded metal alloy, 31 x 11 3/4 inches
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.09.0297

Each Buddhist country has its interpretation of the stupa, a large-scale architectural reliquary and object of veneration. In Thailand it has an elongated bell shape, tapering at the top where the umbrellas form a single unit. Often patrons commissioned sets of small devotional stupas, such as this. Some sets contained a thousand pieces.

8 TWO PAGES OF THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM (PRAJNAPARAMITA) SUTRA MANUSCRIPT

Transcribed in Tibetan script on black paper are pages of the Perfection of Wisdom scripture, which promotes the idea of complete release from the world of existence. The scripture explains the unity of all phenomena — everything is the Buddha. On either side of the text are two esoteric deities: the upper page shows a seated Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of wisdom, left, and Avalokiteshvara on the right. On the lower page, left, is a blue-skinned Vajrapani, Holder of the Vajra. A wrathful bodhisattva, he represents the power of all Buddhas. Vaishravana, Guardian King of the North, rides a white lion on the right.
9  The All-Seeing Lord with Four Arms
   Avalokiteshvara Chaturbhuja
   Tibet, 14th century
   Wood with pigments, 6 3/4 x 16 3/4 x 1 1/3 inches

Lush scrolls of foliage frame the four-armed Avalokiteshvara seated on a throne within this wooden bas-relief. Such decorative themes can be traced back to Indian Buddhist monuments such as the 6th century Dhamek Stupa. Many beautiful geometric and floral designs accompanied the transmission of Buddhist icons as they traveled throughout Asia.

10  The Lhasa River
   Losang Gyatso (American. b. Tibet, 1953)
   Wood and red paint, 4 x 15 x 12 inches
   Courtesy of the artist

Using a modern minimalist format and beautiful wood, Losang Gyatso has created a contemporary homage to the ancient scriptures. Sitting on top of the pristine slab of wood is a page of a sutra/inscribed with words. To resemble the edges of a book’s pages, the sides of the wood are colored red. By mixing ancient and contemporary art, Losang keeps his native traditions alive.

11  Eleven-headed Avalokiteshvara
   Inner Mongolia, 18th century
   Metal alloy, gilding, pigments, 14 3/4 x 5 3/4 x 5 inches
   Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.04.0158

This Bodhisattva’s eleven heads, to better hear and see the devotee’s cries, and his six extra arms give him an increased ability to help. One tradition explained that the Bodhisattva was so moved by humanity’s suffering that his head split open to reveal the extra heads. A spiritual wind sets his scarves, decorated in contrasting gilt, aflutter.

12  Eleven-headed Avalokiteshvara
   Tibet or China, c. 17th-18th century
   Gilded bronze, 16 x 6 3/4 x 4 1/2 inches
   Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.04.0160

Songtsen Gampo (c. 7th century), the 33rd king of Tibet devised the iconography for this icon. The catalogue of the Jokhang, or Crystal Mirror, compiled by the Fifth Dalai Lama in the 17th century, describes three main white faces of peaceful action; three wrathful golden ones of increased action; two wrathful coral-red faces of powerful action, and the uppermost two wrathful black faces of dominant action. A saffron-colored head of Amitabha is at top. Here Avalokiteshvara has ten arms, instead of the usual eight of the eleven-headed form.
13  **Thirteen-headed, Thousand-armed Avalokiteshvara**  
China or Mongolia, c. 17th - 18th century  
Gilded bronze, 9 3/4 x 4 1/2 x 3 1/2 inches  
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.04.0127  

Artists tried to visually express the attributes of the new esoteric deities. In India they piled the 11 heads into the form of a pyramidal crown and rendered six arms as naturally emitting from the body. Chinese artists in the Tang Era (618-907 CE) inscribed the thousand arms in fine lines on the halo. These extra appendages convey the extraordinary powers of this Avalokiteshvara.

14  **Four-armed Avalokiteshvara or Shadakshari Lokeshvara**  
Mongolia or China, c. 18th - 19th century  
Gilded and painted metal alloy, semiprecious stone inlays, 24 x 17 x 11 1/2 inches  
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.04.0298  

This four-armed Bodhisattva has an inwardly assured expression common in later Tibetan-style art. Seated in meditative posture, with legs in full lotus pose, the Bodhisattva has two of his hands clasped in greeting, a third holds a rosary, the fourth a lotus flower. The flowing ribbons and multiple adornments are inlaid with semiprecious gems. This is Avalokiteshvara of Six Syllables, that is the six-syllable mantra: Om mani padme hum, the jewel is in the lotus.

15  **Four-armed Avalokiteshvara or Shadakshari Lokeshvara**  
Northeastern Tibet or Mongolia, c. 18th - 19th century  
Pigment on cloth, 86 x 55 1/2 inches  
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.11.0789  

The Karmapas, the oldest lineage in Tibet, are manifestations of Shadakshari Avalokiteshvara, lord of the six realms of existence and the lotus mantra. Two of the Bodhisattva's four hands are in prayer position. Others hold a crystal rosary and a lotus blossom. Distinctively, he wears an antelope skin with head over his shoulder.

16  **Eight-armed Avalokiteshvara Amoghapasa**  
Nepal, 18th century  
Gilt bronze, rock crystal, semi-precious stones, 31 1/2 x 12 1/2 x 6 inches  
Gift of Dr. Dallas Pratt  
Collection of the Staten Island Museum, A.1958.2  

With its eight arms, which hold a book, a rope, a trident, a lamp, and a lotus blossom, this figure is identifiable as Amoghapasa. Unfailingly, rope catches the faithful with his lasso and brings them to salvation. Icons were often crafted from precious substances, such as rock crystal and adorned with gilt and semi-precious stones.
17 Eighteen-armed Kannon Embroidered Wall Hanging  
*Depicting the Bodhisattva Kannon (Avalokiteshvara)*  
Japan, 18th century  
Silk appliqué, gold-wrapped thread embroidery, paint, 100 x 75 inches  
Gift of Mr. Alex Dorin  
Collection of the Staten Island Museum, A1978.6  
Note: this work is found in the Treasure Box Gallery

18 Thousand-armed Kannon  
Japanese, 19th century  
Woodcut print on paper, 10 x 4 inches  
Mitche and Helen Kunzman Collection

Often Japanese popular woodblock prints portray famous images. Here the seated Eleven-headed, Thousand-armed Kannon is probably a reference to the Senju Kannon from Fujieda, Osaka, made in 752. Both portray Kannon seated on a tall lotus base with its many hands holding the attributes splayed out around the figure like a mandorla, the almond-shaped aureole that surrounds the body.  
Avalokiteshvara is seated on a double-lotus pedestal, holding Tantric symbols: lotus, wheel, Khurvanga (magician’s stick), stupa, rosary, bell, mirror, lasso, scroll, willow stick or hook, hand in Vitarka mudra, bow, moon disc, arrow, aś, trident. Her crown bears a small image of Amida (Amitabha) Buddha.

19 Green Tara  
Nepal or Tibet, 17th - 18th century  
Metal alloy, gilded, painted and inlaid with turquoise and coral, 6 1/2 x 4 1/2 x 3 inches  
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art | 85.04.0086

This icon of Green Tara sits on a double lotus base with her left leg folded and her right leg extended. She has one flower ornament on each shoulder. Her five-part crown displays the Five Dhyana Buddhas; beneath it, her hair is piled up, but one tendril hangs down; the crown’s ornate ribbons flank her face. Small precious stones add to the delicacy of this image.

20 White Tara  
China, 16th-17th century  
Copper alloy, turquoise and coral, 13 1/2 x 9 3/4 x 6 1/4  
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.04.0094

Tara is universal compassion and a goddess of long life who helps devotees overcome obstacles, particularly impediments to the practice of religion. She also protects from danger and distress. Tara’s idealized divine beauty is expressed in her physical form, graceful posture, delicate adornments, and swirling scarf. She holds lotus blossoms in her left hand.
21  White Tara
2008
Tashi Dhargyal (Tibetan, b.1979)
Mineral pigments and 24k gold on cotton, 43 1/4 x 27 1/2 x 5 inches
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, JMA2016.1283
Tashi Dhargyal, a Tibetan thangka master, now living in Sonoma, California, painted this bejeweled White Tara seated in a lush green-and-blue-paradisiacal landscape. She has seven eyes of knowledge—three on her face, two on her palms, and two on the soles of her feet. Her right hand is in the wish-granting mudra, or hand gesture, while her left holds a lotus blossom.

22  Clearlight Tara
2011
Losang Gyatso, (American, b. Tibet, 1953)
Digital print on archival photo paper, 53 x 40 1/2 inches
Lent by the artist
Born in 1953 in Tibet, the artist Losang Gyatso was educated in London and lived in Dharamsala, India, before coming to the United States. In his works he strives to keep Tibetan traditions alive as well as to employ contemporary media and techniques. Here inspired by a traditional Tibetan mandala featuring Tara, he creates a brilliantly colored, light-filled contemporary rendering of the seated goddess.

23  Seated Guanyin
Fujian, China, 17th century
Dehua porcelain, 10 inches high
Private Collection
Avalokiteshvara promised the faithful the birth of a child, and this goddess of compassion naturally became a guardian of children. The Dehua kilns in Fujian, China, which produced many exquisite white porcelain Buddhist figurines, portrayed Guanyin in several ways—afloat on the China Sea, sitting at ease in Potalaka, and as the protector of children, like this figureine seated on a throne and flanked by two children. Comparisons with icons of Mary, Mother of Jesus, are apt, as Christianity was making inroads in China at this time.

24  Guan Yin
China, late Qing Dynasty, 19th century
Marble, 8 x 24 inches
Gift of Mr. Allan Gerdau
Collection of the Staten Island Museum, A1956.76.1
Note: this work is found in the Treasure Box Gallery
Highly feminized images of Guan Yin were popular in Qing Dynasty China (1644-1912). This fragmentary relief shows Guan Yin as a heavenly maiden, descending to earth to aid the faithful. Her broad face revives an ancient ideal of beauty from the Tang Dynasty (618-907).
Wrathful Deities

25 Hayagriva
Mongolia, 18th century
Gilded-and-painted copper, 17 x 15 1/4 x 7 1/4 inches
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.04.0029

Hayagriva (Horse-neck) is a meditational deity, or yidam, of the Kriya Tantra or the external practices of ritual purification and cleanliness. This colorful figure is typical of Tibetan-Mongolian art. Other cultures eschew a brilliant palette but the pigments add to the presentation of the ferocious characteristics of the deity who stands in a dance mode. His six arms, with hands performing delicate gestures (mudras), encircle the figure. His eight feet trample on eight Naga kings, malignant water spirits.

26 Hayagriva
China, 17th - 18th century
Gilded and painted metal alloy, 14 1/4 x 10 3/4 x 6
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.04.0032

This elegant icon of Hayagriva has six arms, which hold attributes such as the thunderbolt or Vajra and bells. Surrounded by a delicately filigreed mandorla, he wears a crown decorated with skulls and a necklace of severed heads. Each foot stands on a writhing snake that represents the evil spirit that causes the skin diseases he has the power to cure.

At Home in Potalaka

27 Avalokiteshvara Khasarpana
China or Eastern Tibet, c. 18th - 19th century
Pigment on cloth, 44 1/2 x 23 3/4 inches
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.11.0792

Khasarpana Avalokiteshvara sits at leisure under a tree in Potalaka, making the hand gesture for charity. Mid-ground are the seas, at right a bank of islands. Above is a red-skinned Amitabha Buddha, in the upper right is Amitayus. The two elephants symbolize the trained mind; the dancing goddess plays the vina as a sound offering. White Mahakala, a wealth-granting deity, with a flaming mandorla, is in the right foreground.

28 Seated Kannon in Potalaka
Japan, 19th century
Gilt Lacquer, wood, 9 x 4 3/4 inches
Private Collection

On a base resembling the rock at Puto, Avalokiteshvara sits in the princely pose, his head slightly inclined. A leaf shape mandorla rises behind him. This icon is made of lacquer: the viscous sap of the lac tree is painted over the light wood figure and then gold décor is applied. The lacquer coating makes the wood impervious to water and insects.
29 Four-armed Avalokiteshvara Mandala
Dharamsala, India, 1991
Pigment on cloth, 29 1/2 x 29 1/2 inches
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 92.11.1025
This mandala was commissioned to honor the visit of the Dalai Lama to the Jacques Marchais Museum on October 12, 1991. Monks from the Namgyal Monastery, who personally attend the Dalai Lama, delivered it. Avalokiteshvara sits at the center with the Five Transcendent Buddhas. The four sides have palace facades, situating the painting in cosmic space.

30 Jeweled Plaque with Nine Buddhist Deities
Nepal, c. 17th-19th century
Wood, copper filigree, gilded copper, semiprecious stones, on wood 20 x 16 x 1 inches
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.06.0154
Bejeweled hanging plaques, such as this Nepalese example, were kept in a home shrine. In the center of this gorgeous mandala is an 8-armed Avalokiteshvara, surrounded by a number of deities: a turquoise deity, carrying a jewel, and a coral Sarasvati playing a vina. At top is a black quartz Prajnaparamita, a lapis lazuli Medicine Buddha, and a second coral Avalokiteshvara. The lowest register shows a lapis lazuli Vajrapani, a white stone Padmapani, and a coral Manjushri brandishing a sword.

31 Hayagriva Phurpa
Qing Dynasty, China, 18th century
Metal alloy, turquoise inlay, 16 x 5 x 5 1/2 inches
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.03.0112
A phurpa, sometimes called a “magic dagger”, is a Tantric ritual object used to conquer evil spirits and to destroy obstacles. The practitioner using the phurpa first meditates, then recites the Sadhana of the Phurpa, and then invites the deity to enter the dagger. The practitioner visualizes stabbing the evil spirit, thus subduing it. The success of such rituals depends on the practitioner’s spirituality, concentration, motivation, and his karmic connections with the deity.

32 Skull Cup (Kapala)
Human skulls are collected from areas around the sky burials, where the dead are exposed to predatory birds. Collected skulls indicate the future good karma of the deceased. Washed and cut into a cup and opulently decorated, Kapala may be used to offer food to the gods or blood in Tantric rituals.
33 Jeweled Neck Ornament
Tibet, c. 18th -19th century
Gold, silver, turquoise, coral, amethyst, and other stones, 6 1/2 x 7 x 1/2 inches
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.06.0458

Tibetan deities are treated as honored guests and adorned by worshippers who drape the statues in jewels and silk. This colorful neck ornament embedded with semi-precious stones, impressive in size and complexity of design, is based on local fashions. Placing such jewels on the icon metaphorically expresses the god’s great power and importance.

34 Thigh Bone Trumpet
Tibet, date unknown
Human thighbone, copper, silver wire, glass inlays, 13 x 3 1/2 x 2 1/4 inches
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.08.0589

A human femoral thighbone is obtained from the area of the sky burial and cleaned, hollowed out, and pierced with holes for playing. Along with the bell and drum, it is used to make music to summon demons and ghosts. Then the practitioner offers his whole body to eat, a “body gift,” to Chod (to cut off). The ritual symbolically severs attachments to one’s own body and ego. w

35 Bell with Stand
China or Mongolia, 19th century
Metal, wood, 5 1/4 x 3 inches
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.09.0137

Tibetan rituals often pair the bell together with a Vajra, or thunderbolt. This bell’s handle takes the form of a half Vajra. The Vajra represents the compassion of all Buddhas, the masculine principle. The bell represents skill, the female principle. The Vajra is a visualization of the Buddha’s mind and the bell is Buddha’s body.

36 Vajra
Place of origin unknown, date unknown
Metal, 1 3/8 x 6 1/2 x 1 1/4 inches
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.09.0734

Tibetan rituals often pair the bell together with a Vajra, or thunderbolt. This bell’s handle takes the form of a half Vajra. The Vajra represents the compassion of all Buddhas, the masculine principle. The bell represents skill, the female principle. The Vajra is a visualization of the Buddha’s mind and the bell is Buddha’s body.
37 Prayer Wheel
China or Mongolia, Date unknown
Metal alloy, wood, fibers, beads, 6 x 8 x 4 3/4 inches
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.09.0207

Prayer wheels may be small for personal use or large-sized and mounted in sets outside the temple. Nowadays, the prayer is printed on paper and wound around a rod and covered with a metal cylinder. The décor comprises the Avalokiteshvara mantra — Om mani padme hum, the jewel is in the lotus. Spinning the wheel is equivalent to reciting the scripture.

38 Shrine
Nepal, c. 18th – 19th century
Wood, gilded copper, repousse, filigree, silver, and jewel inlays, 42 x 24 x 14 inches
Collection of the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, 85.10.0317

This shrine, for worship in a temple or home, has extremely ornate metalwork and inlays of semiprecious stones. Like the stupa, it has an umbrella topped by a vase. The profuse decorations include garlands and flying celestials. Three niches separated by gilded pillars resting on a vase occupy the main part, which houses a crowned Buddha at center, and two flanking four-armed Bodhisattvas — Prajnaparamita, at left, and Avalokiteshvara, with their attendants. Highly skilled artisans using the repoussé technique (hammering out the relief from behind) crafted this shine.

39 Ruth St. Denis in Kuan Yin (Guanyin)
Photographer, Ira Lawrence Hill
Retouched photograph, 1916, 8 1/2 x 10 1/2 inches
Denishawn Collection no.356-414
New York Public Library, Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Ruth St. Denis (1879-1968) was a pioneer of modern dance. She began her solo career in 1905, introduced eastern themes into her work and combined them with popular dance techniques that she learned from vaudeville. She performed two solo dances in the role of Guanyin: the piece entitled Kuan Yin seen in this photo, and another called White Jade.

40 Avalokiteshvara
2013
Longbin Chen (b. Taiwan, 1964)
Paper sculpture using Indian art catalogs, 33 x 24 x 11 inches
Lent by the artist

Longbin Chen employs printed books, as the material for his sculptures and scrupulously selects relevant books, in this case Asian art catalogues, for the subject. With his power saw he carves them into portraits of current or historical characters and Buddhist deities. Looking at the back, one can see the spines of the books used in this sculpture.
41 Guanyin in Puto
2015
Yang Jingsong (b. Chongqing, China, 1971)
Ink pencil and pigments on canvas, 59 x 51.125 inches
Lent by the artist

Using the archaic 8th-century Chinese style of painting the landscape as a series of peaks tinted blue and green, Yang Jingsong recreates the island of Puto, which he has visited many times. This type of Guanyin also dates to that era, with a sensuous rendering of the body adorned with jewels wearing a meditative facial expression commonly seen at the Buddhist caves of Dunhuang in the Gobi Desert, which he has also visited.

42 Sera Monastery, Lhasa Tibet
1993
Gao Bo (b. Deyang, Sichuan, China, 1964)
C Print, blood, 70 7/8 x 31 1/2 inches
Lent by the artist

Since 1986 the photographer Gao Bo has been visiting Tibet and taking pictures of both the religious and daily life of its people. Intimately observing life with the monks, he had the unique opportunity to attend their ceremonies. Here he captures the procession of the Yellow Hat monks of the Sera Monastery in Lhasa, trekking through the snow. Established in the early 15th century by the founder of the Gelukpa Order, this great university monastery is associated with the Dalai Lama. In Tibetan fashion Gao has inscribed the photo using his own blood, which was drawn at the local hospital.

43 Tibetan Monk
2010
Gao Lei (born in Beijing, China, 1965)
C Print, 33 5/8 x 24 inches
Lent by the artist

Gao Lei's portrait of a young monk wearing layers of traditional dress to protect him from the harsh weather is set against a huge and turbulent sky. He appears floating like a spirit. Chinese rule threatens the survival of the Tibetan culture by restricting Tibetan costume and language. The fate of this youth living in Tibet under foreign dominion and the severe climate of the region is sadly apparent.

44 Living Buddha
2010
Gao Lei (b. Beijing, China, 1965)
C Print, 33 5/8 x 24 inches
Lent by the artist

Gao Lei has been a frequent visitor to Tibet and found deep kindness and spirituality among the monks, with whom he lived. Sharing their meager accommodations, he found solace from the hectic and highly competitive life of Chinese cities. His photograph of this monk, or living Buddha, captures the extraordinary serenity of its people.

45 Luminous Compassion
2016
Xin Song, (American, b. China, 1970)
Cut Paper, 70 x 54 1/2 inches
Lent by the artist, with funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services

Contained within a rosette shape, Guanyin sits in a peaceful meditative posture, her four arms in traditional gestures. Based on Chinese models, the figure is feminine and elegant. Through the delicate holes of the cut white paper, light infuses the design, making the image seem like a celestial apparition.
glossary
Adapted from Jacques Marchais Tibetan Museum Glossary of Terms

Bodhisattva  An individual who, upon achieving enlightenment, postpones his or her own
Nirvana to help others achieve enlightenment, which is the ultimate act of detachment.
Buddhism  The religion practiced by many Asians, based on the teachings of Shakyamuni
Buddha from northern India in the 6th century BCE.
Dalai Lama  The Buddhist religious leader of the Tibetans. The present Dalai Lama is the 14th
in the lineage and he lives in exile in Dharamsala, India.
Dharma  The teachings of Buddha.
Karma  The totality of a person’s deeds during successive incarnations, which influences his or
her destiny.
Lama  A wise teacher.
Lhasa  The capital and largest city in Tibet.
Lotus  A symbol often used as a base for Buddhist sacred images. The flower represents purity,
enlightenment, and transcendence.
Mahayana  A later development of Buddhism, which embraces many deities, and is widely
practiced around the world.
Mandala  A geometric cosmic design in Buddhist art.
Mudra  Hand gestures with special meanings used in dance, drama, art, and religion.
Nirvana  The state ofquietude and happiness after death and release from repeated
reincarnations because of enlightenment or the realization of essential truths in earthly life.
Potala Palace  The winter home of the Dalai Lama, located in the Lhaua Valley, it contains
over 1000 rooms and measures 440 feet in height and 900 feet in length. No metal was used
in its construction.
Potalaka  The legendary home of Avalokiteshvara (Guan yin) on the island of Puto in the
South China Sea off the southeastern coast.
Prayer Wheel (Tib. Mani-Khor-Lo) Tibetan prayer wheels are cylindrical devices containing
prayer scrolls. The act of spinning a prayer wheel is equivalent to praying.
Stupa  Originally an earthen mound within which are buried the relics of the Buddha, it has
evolved into architectural structures and portable versions that signify the Buddha’s presence. In
China the stupa evolved into the pagoda, in Tibet, the chorten.
Sutra  A scripture or sacred text.
Tara  Female incarnations of Avalokiteshvara. One legend tells that the White and Green Taras
were born of Avalokiteshvara’s tears of compassion. Other taras named for colors are Red,
Black and Blue.
Thangka  A portable hanging scroll holding on its surface paintings of a Buddhist deity, scene,
or mandala.
Theravada  The earliest form of Buddhism, based exclusively on the teachings of the Historic
Buddha Shakyamuni (Gautama), still practiced in Sri Lanka and Thailand.
Vajra  A ritual object representing a stylized thunderbolt, usually used in combination with a bell.
Vajrayana  Known, also, as Tantric or Esoteric Buddhism, a form of Buddhism practiced in Tibet
and other parts of Asia, which uses vivid imagery of many deities in their various manifestations.
Zen  A form of Mahayana Buddhism developed in China by the great Indian Buddhist holy
man, Bodhidharma, known in Japan as Daruma, in the 5th or 6th century (Chan Buddhism). Zen
practice emphasizes simplicity, non-attachment, and meditation on the void.
Terms with numbers:

The Four Noble Truths
1. There is suffering
2. There is an origin or a cause of suffering
3. There is a cessation of suffering
4. There is a path to the cessation of suffering: the EIGHTFOLD Path.

In the architectural design of a Tibetan temple there are four columns which represent the Four Noble Truths.

The Eightfold Path
1. Right Understanding or view
2. Right Awareness of Thought
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action or behavior
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration or contemplation

The wheel of the dharma (teaching of the Buddha) contains eight spokes, which represent the Eightfold Path.

Three Jewels
1. The Buddha – the Teacher
2. The Dharma – the Teachings of the Buddha
3. The Sangha – the community of Buddhist Practitioners

Other common names of Avalokiteshvara (Sanskrit)
Chenrezig or Chenrezi (Tibet)
Guanyin (China, old spelling: Kuan Yin)
Kannon (Japan)
Kwannon (Korea)

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