

GODDESS

DIVINE ENERGY

SYMPOSIUM

Friday 13 and Saturday 14 October 2006

Art Gallery of New South Wales
in conjunction with the exhibition *Goddess: Divine Energy*



Jackie Menzies is Head Curator of Asian Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, having been appointed inaugural Curator of Asian Art in 1980. She is also a Director of VisAsia (since 2000). She has curated/organised many exhibitions and edited/contributed to many catalogues, including *Buddha: Radiant Awakening* (2001), *Modern Boy, Modern Girl: Modernity in Japanese Art 1910–1935* (1998), *India: Dancing to the Flute* (1997), *Sacred Images of Sri Lanka* (1994), and *Imperial China* (1992). She has been responsible for two publications on the Gallery's Asian collections: *Asian Collection Handbook* (1990) and *The Asian Collections* (2003).

David Templeman is an independent scholar and PhD candidate at Monash Asia Institute, Monash University. His first published work, in 1981, was a translation of a 17th century Tibetan Tara text. Since that time he has pursued interests in the development of Tibetan artistic styles and the translation of Tibetan historical works. His current research deals with the life and works of the 16–17th century Tibetan historian Taranatha and his understanding of late Indian Buddhism.

cover: **Female figure** (detail) India, Madhya Pradesh, Chandella period (c 831–1308), c1000s, sandstone, 80 x 25 x 19 cm. Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi. Gift of Walter Spink

over: **Sitatapatra** (detail) Central Tibet, 1700s–1800s pigment on cloth, 142 x 84 cm Riverside Museum Collection, The Rose Museum, Brandeis University

Dr Gauri Parimoo Krishnan is Senior Curator for South Asia at the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore. She holds a PhD in art history from the M.S. University of Baroda, India. She has curated a number of acclaimed Asian art exhibitions for the ACM, including *Alamkara: 5000 Years of India; Ramayana: A Living Tradition; and Krishna the Blue God*. She is author of the forthcoming publications, *Power of the Female* and *Devangana Sculptures on Hindu temple Architecture*. She is currently involved in writing and editing the catalogue of the south Asian collections at ACM.

Dr Jim Masselos is Honorary Reader in history in the School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry, University of Sydney. He specialises in the study of South Asia and has authored and edited many articles and books on India, most recently the photographic study *Beato's Delhi 1857, 1997* (2000). He was co-curator of the Art Gallery of New South Wales exhibitions *Dancing to the Flute: Music and Dance in Indian Art* (1997) and *Divine and Courty Life in Indian Painting* (1991). With Jackie Menzies he shares an Australian Research Council linkage grant for research related to the Goddess exhibition.

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SPEAKERS

Dr Jane Casey is an independent curator and art historian specialising in Himalayan art. She is the author of over 25 books and articles including *Divine presence, arts of India and the Himalayas* (with Naman Parmeshwar Ahuja and David Weldon, 2003), *The sculptural heritage of Tibet, Buddhist art in the Nyingjei Lam collection* (1999), *Sacred visions, early paintings from Central Tibet* (with Steven Kossak, 1998) and *Tibetan art, Towards a definition of style* (1997).

Dr Chaya Chandrasekhar is Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. She holds a PhD in South Asian art from The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. Prior to moving to Sydney in September 2005 to take up the position at the Gallery, she taught art history at Western Michigan University and The Ohio State University. Exhibitions she has worked on previously: *Mirrors of the Heart Mind: The Rezk Collection of Tibetan Art*, and the *Circle of Bliss: Buddhist Meditational Art* (2003).

Alan Croker is Director of Design 5 – Architects Pty Ltd, a Sydney firm specialising in conservation and related new work. His first visit to India in 1982 sparked an interest which has become a lifelong journey of the spirit into the heart of the Indian tradition, particularly South India. He now visits India almost every year, mainly to attend special ceremonies and festivals at the great and ancient temple to Lord Nataraja in Chidambaram in Tamil Nadu.

Dr Tamara Ditrich is Lecturer in Eastern Religions and Co-director of the Centre for Buddhist Studies, University of Queensland. She teaches Hinduism, Buddhism, Sanskrit and Meditation in Eastern Religions. Her current research focuses on the role of dual deities in the *Rigveda* and the maternal subjectivity in early Hinduism.

Professor B.N. Goswamy is a distinguished scholar and art historian. He is Professor Emeritus of Art History at Punjab University, Chandigarh; a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and the Royal Asiatic Society, London; member of American Oriental Society and Fellow of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai. The recipient of many honours, he has been a Visiting Professor at European, American and Canadian universities, and is the author of many books and catalogues, including *Domains of Wonder: Masterworks of Indian Painting* (2005); *Nainsukh of Guler* (1997); *Indian Costumes in the collection of the Calico Museum of Textiles* (1993); *Pahari Masters* (with E. Fischer, 1992); *Wonders of a Golden Age* (with E. Fischer, 1987) and *Essence of Indian Art* (1986).

John Guy MA, FSA, is Senior Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. His research interests focus on South Indian cultural relations with Southeast Asia in the fields of sculpture, architecture and the textile trade. Major publications include: *Woven Cargoes. Indian Textiles in the East* (1998), *Vietnamese Ceramics. A Separate Tradition* (co-author, 1998), *Indian Art and Connoisseurship* (editor, 1995), *Arts of India: 1550–1900* (co-editor, 1990), and *Ceramic Traditions of Southeast Asia* (1989). His most recent book *Indian Temple Sculpture (V&A)* is to be published March 2007.

Dr Madhu Khanna is Associate Professor (Religions/Indic Studies) and project director of Narivada: Gender, Culture and Civilization Network, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi. Major publications include: *Yantra: The tantric symbol of cosmic unity* (co-author, 1997), and *The tantric way* (1989) both published by Thames & Hudson, London with American, French, German and Danish editions. Her seminal work on the Shrichakra of the cult of Goddess Tripurasundari based on Sanskrit manuscript sources is forthcoming.

BOOKING FORM

GODDESS: DIVINE ENERGY SYMPOSIUM

Includes lunch, refreshments, exhibition viewing.
Book both days to receive an invitation to the exhibition opening.

One day \$80, \$70 AGS/TAASA members, \$50 student concession
Both days \$150, \$130 AGS/TAASA members, \$90 student concession
Bookings and pre-payment are essential. Early bookings recommended.

	Non-members	No of tickets	AGS/TAASA members	No of tickets	Student conc	No of tickets	TOTAL
Friday	\$70		\$80		\$50		\$
Saturday	\$70		\$80		\$50		\$
Both days	\$130		\$150		\$90		\$

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HOW TO BOOK

Phone (02) 9225 1878
Post Art Gallery Society of NSW
Art Gallery Road The Domain Sydney NSW 2000
Web www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/events/symposia
In-person Members Lounge, Lower Level 3

GODDESS: DIVINE ENERGY SYMPOSIUM

Friday 13 and Saturday 14 October 2006

Domain Theatre, Lower Level 3

Art Gallery of New South Wales

This special two-day symposium, held in conjunction with the Gallery's major summer exhibition, *Goddess: Divine Energy* 13 October to 28 January 2007, offers a rare opportunity to delve into the absorbing world of Hindu and Buddhist goddesses. Day 1 Friday focuses on the Hindu tradition while Day 2 Saturday considers Buddhist and tantric aspects of the Goddess. Led by experts who have spent years studying different goddesses, and who have contributed to the impressive catalogue of the show, participants will gain insights into the mystical and uplifting worlds of Hindu and Buddhist goddesses while realising that much of their wisdom is applicable to our everyday lives.

Countless images of the goddess in Hindu and Buddhist art depict her variously as seductive, benevolent, malevolent: a loving mother, a compassionate saviour or rage personified. With her male counterpart she can be the compliant consort, the passionate lover, or a symbol of the non-duality of ultimate Reality. The goddess first appears as a symbol of fertility and the generative power of nature in the millennia BCE. Then, as Devi (goddess), she appears in Hinduism in myriad manifestations personifying the power (*shakti*) of the universe. Popular goddesses include Parvati, the consort of Shiva; Durga, slayer of the buffalo demon; Kali, the *shakti* of Durga; and Radha, devoted companion of Krishna.

Goddesses appear in Buddhism as the religion expanded with the doctrines of the Mahayana and Vajrayana schools. They manifest as beneficent deities invoked by the recitation of special *dharani* formulae, and as female buddhas (or *yoginis*), that is, those who have realised supreme, perfect enlightenment. In line with the literature of the Highest Yoga Tantras, they are portrayed locked in intimate embrace with their male counterparts, respectively symbolising wisdom (*prajna*) and compassion (*karuna*), encapsulating in beautiful imagery the Vajrayana teaching that wisdom and compassion lead to transcendent bliss.

PROGRAM

Friday 13 October

9am REGISTRATION

9.30 Welcome

Edmund Capon, director

9.45 Introduction to Exhibition

Jackie Menzies and Jim Masselos
The exhibition *Goddess, Divine Energy* is arranged thematically, starting from early goddesses, moving through goddesses in Hinduism to goddesses in Buddhism. Between the Hindu and Buddhist sections is a section looking at yantras and the narrative of the subtle body. Jackie gives an overview of these sections, focusing on some of the major works in the exhibition. Jim follows with a presentation on the goddess and partner, using selected images from the exhibition.

10.30 Goddesses in the Vedas Tamara Ditrich

A unique feature of Vedic religion as expressed in the *Rigveda*, the oldest sacred text of the Hindus, is the worship of deities in pairs of the same gender. While Vedic goddesses are usually worshipped as single deities, when a goddess is addressed together with another deity, the pair often comprises two females. In this respect the Vedic deities are clearly distinguished from the well known divine couples of male gods with their female consorts that have had the most prominent position in the Hindu pantheon since the post-Vedic period.

11.00 Sexual imagery in early Indian art: syncretism and the divine androgyne John Guy

The explicitly sexual dimension in the representation of gods in northern India in the early centuries BCE is a reflection of a struggle to create icons that reflected that which is inherently concealed to the mundane world. A recurring theme in the great collection of myths which constitute the Indian cosmogony is sexual ambiguity and the need to explain the pro-generative process in a system which is essentially

unitary. Ardhanarishvara – Shiva and Parvati represented in a single body – reflects the ambiguities and tensions inherent in these creation myths.

12.00

LUNCH & EXHIBITION VIEWING

1.30pm The Painters' Goddess: Reflections of faith in Indian art B. N. Goswamy

This lecture brings in a range of materials, including works featuring Radha, who turned from Beloved to Goddess, but then goes on to focus upon what was intensely personal to the painters, for they did centre their thoughts, or meditate, upon, an *ishta* – a deity truly close to their inner beings – before they sat down to paint. One has to read carefully into works before one can locate and identify that favoured figure or icon, but the effort is worth making, for it leads one to a deeper understanding of modes of thought and expression.

2.30 Power of the Female: Some thoughts on the early female sculptures in Indian art Gauri Krishnan

A number of female terracotta figurines from prior to the Common Era suggest the rise of goddesses in early South Asia. What may have caused such a rise or when this may have occurred, during the Vedic period or the later Puranic period, however, remains unclear. The importance of semi-divine nature spirits like *yakshinis* and *apsaras* that played on the general human psyche may have also been responsible for fuelling the importance afforded to goddesses. Using literary and archaeological evidence, this talk addresses issues such as notions of fertility and sexuality, and the development of magico-religious cults of the mother goddess, which ultimately culminates with Durga as the supreme manifestation.

3.15 EXHIBITION VIEWING

Saturday 14 October

9.30am REGISTRATION

10.00 Jina Prajnas: female Buddhas of the mandala Chaya Chandrasekhar

A set of five transcendent Buddhas, collectively known as the Pancha Jinas (Five Victors), form the underlying basis of Vajrayana, the esoteric branch of Mahayana Buddhism. In the past, the male aspects of the Pancha Jinas, the Jina Buddhas, have enjoyed ample recognition, earning inclusion in numerous discussions, both theoretical and art historical. Their partners, the Jina Prajnas, the female Buddhas that are within the tradition inseparable from their male counterparts, have, however, received far less attention. This paper explores the significance of the Jina Prajnas as they emerge within Vajrayana to articulate the fundamental principles of the religion.

10.45 The Goddess as Divine Lover: Maithuna imagery in Himalayan art Jane Casey

The *maithuna* is a Sanskrit term for imagery depicting gods and goddesses in sexual embrace. Although frequently encountered in the Himalayan region, *maithuna* imagery is relatively rare in other religious traditions. In India, particularly after the ninth century, Hindu and Buddhist communities commissioned *maithuna* images, and the iconography subsequently flourished in Tibet and Nepal. This lecture examines the development of *maithuna* imagery in Himalayan art, touching upon some of the social and religious purposes the imagery may have served, as well as the unique philosophical tenets it was meant to embody.

11.45 MORNING TEA

12.15pm The dakini cult: wild and wonderful goddesses David Templeman

An 11th century Tibetan tantric master observed that there existed three types of dakini; those who devoured human

flesh, those who existed in the world as 'normal' women and those who embodied pure wisdom. The Indian origins of the dakini suggest they were initially found as a class of generic, malicious female demonesses. The Tibetan predilection for such wrathful figures encouraged a proliferation of these forms of the dakini. Although dakinis are frequently referred to as rather abstract 'wisdom-bringers' in the enlightenment process, at times their function links them directly back to the Indian themes of 'troublesome women' and just plain 'nuisances'.

1.00

LUNCH & EXHIBITION VIEWING

2.30 Shakti, the linga and the dance of Nataraja Alan Croker

This paper considers how both the Shiva *linga* and the figure of Shiva in his dancing form of Nataraja symbolise the principles of duality that characterise our understanding of the world. There is the principle of potential action considered as male, while the action itself, and the power and result of that action are considered as the female principle, or *shakti*. These principles embody the process of manifestation of the Supreme Being which is unmanifest: a singular, undivided, non-dual state of pure consciousness.

3.00 The symbolic narrative of the subtle body Madhu Khanna

The Hindu Tantric tradition of goddess worship evolved from the flowering of the concept and ritual of the subtle body in the medieval period. With the advent of the scientific revolution the medical sciences have dominated our understanding of the body, based on a dualism between mind and soul and rooted in the split between the domain of nature and the realm of the sacred. Asian religious traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Daoism have offered an 'embodied' vision of the self which transcends the biological materialism of the body.

4.00 RECEPTION

