

Year Ahead: 2013



The Cyrus Cylinder; Clay; Babylon, Mesopotamia, after 539 BCE; British Museum, London, ME 90920, Photo: ©The Trustees of the British Museum

The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia

March 9–April 28, 2013 Sackler

Modest in scale and appearance, the Cyrus Cylinder is one of the most important and iconic objects in world history. The origins of this baked clay object, which was buried as a foundation deposit, can be traced to the Persian king Cyrus the Great's conquest of Babylon in the sixth century BCE. It bears an inscription, written in Babylonian cuneiform, that claims Cyrus's victory over the last Babylonian ruler, Nabonidus. Also in this text, Cyrus declared religious freedom for his newly conquered people. He encouraged the Jews to return to Jerusalem to build the second temple, which earned him the title "shepherd of God" and even the "Lord's anointed" (Messiah) in the Book of Isaiah. Although the Cylinder was not discovered until 1879, Cyrus's support for religious tolerance has inspired generations of philosophers, rulers, and statesmen—from ancient Greece to the Renaissance, and from the Founding Fathers to the modern-day Middle East.

On loan from the British Museum, this remarkable object makes its US debut at the Sackler. It is shown with a number of key items that offer insight into the religious, cultural, and linguistic traditions of the vast and powerful Achaemenid Empire (550–331 BCE) founded by Cyrus the Great.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The following information is current as of January 2013; please discard all previous versions. All listings are subject to change; dates and titles should be confirmed with the Office of Public Affairs and Marketing at 202.633.0271 or PressAsia@si.edu. For press releases and image and caption reports, visit asia.si.edu/press.

Nowruz: A Persian New Year!

March 16, 11 am–5 pm

Freer and Sackler Galleries, S. Dillon Ripley Center

In conjunction with the US debut of the iconic Cyrus Cylinder, all ages are invited to enjoy “Haft Sin” table displays, “fire” jumping, a photo booth, games, stories by Xanthe Gresham, performances by the Nomad Dancers, and live Persian music. Explore digitized photographs by Antoin Sevruguin and participate in family activities. Traditional Persian food by Moby Dick House of Kabob and special cupcakes by Fraiche Cupcakery are available for purchase. Made possible by a generous grant from Jahangir and Eleanor Amuzegar. asia.si.edu/nowruz



Nomad Dancers from 2012 celebration



Promise of Paradise: Chinese Buddhist Sculpture

On view indefinitely Freer

The Freer’s impressive collection of stone and gilt bronze Buddhist sculptures highlights two flourishing ages, the sixth century and the High Tang (6th–8th century). The exhibition’s dramatic focus is the monumental Cosmological Buddha: a life-size stone sculpture covered in intricate representations of the realms of existence, ranging from hell to the abodes of the devas, or Buddhist gods.

Installation view of *Promise of Paradise*

One Man's Search for Ancient China: The Paul Singer Collection

January 19–July 7, 2013 Sackler

The small apartment of psychiatrist-turned-collector and scholar Paul Singer (1904–1997) once held more than 5,000 objects he assembled over seventy years. Singer's bequest to the Sackler Gallery created one of the largest and most significant Chinese archaeological collections in the United States. This exhibition of Singer's gift looks at his life and how important archaeological discoveries have shed new light on both his acquisitions and ancient China.

Photo of Paul Singer's apartment by John Tsantes



Arts of Japan: Edo Aviary and Poetic License

February 2–August 4, 2013 Freer

Continuing a celebration of important Freer holdings in Edo-period art, complementary but distinct installations examine two themes of these works. *Edo Aviary* (gallery 6) traces how depictions of birds, long part of the Japanese visual repertoire, were influenced by natural history painting in the Edo period (1615–1868). Great attention was given to physical accuracy, but the tendency to give birds anthropomorphic qualities also came to the fore. *Poetic License: Making Old Words New* (gallery 7) shows how the interpretation of classical Japanese and Chinese literary traditions, previously the domain of an educated aristocracy, was absorbed into the merchant and artisan classes during the Edo period, producing energetic reconsiderations of time-honored themes.

Rooster, Hen, and Chicks

Kishi Ganku (1749–1838)

Japan, Edo period, 1788

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk

Gift of James Freeman

F2006.2a–d



Sylvan Sounds: Freer, Dewing, and Japan

May 28, 2013–May 28, 2014 Freer

Museum founder Charles Lang Freer's taste for Japanese art grew out of his affection for American tonalist paintings. This intimate exhibition illuminates this connection by juxtaposing landscapes by American artist Thomas Dewing (1851–1938) with Japanese works that Freer acquired in the late 1890s, just after his first tour of Asia.

The Four Sylvan Sounds (detail)

Thomas Wilmer Dewing (1851–1938)

United States, 1896–97

Oil on wood panel

Gift of Charles Lang Freer F1906.73

HandHeld: Gerhard Pulverer's Japanese Illustrated Books

April 6–August 11, 2013 Sackler

Ehon, the Japanese term for woodblock-printed illustrated books, were key sources of knowledge and entertainment during the Edo period (1615–1868). Artists and writers created many designs for these books, and the compact, paper-bound volumes circulated widely. In a striking change from the past, when books were primarily reserved for the elite, the beautiful, intriguing, and humorous subjects in *ehon* brought reading to the masses. Highlights from the Gerhard Pulverer Collection now in the Freer Gallery of Art are shown together for the first time since the museum purchased the collection in 2007.

Selection of books from the Gerhard Pulverer Collection

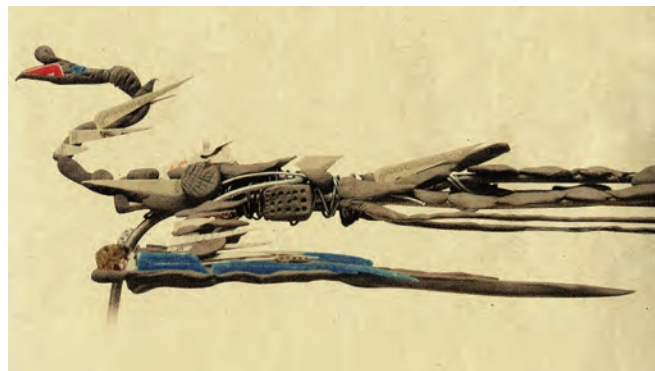


Xu Bing: Phoenix Project

April 27–September 2, 2013 Sackler

Chinese artist Xu Bing spent more than two years creating his newest work, *Phoenix Project*, a massive installation on view at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. At once strange and fiercely beautiful, the *Phoenix Project* installation comprises two birds fabricated from materials found at construction sites in Beijing. This complementary exhibition features materials used to plan the work, including drawings, scale models, and reconfigured construction fragments. Also on view are related objects selected by the artist from the Freer and Sackler collections.

Detail of preparatory sketch for *Phoenix Project*, by Xu Bing.
Courtesy the artist.



Perspectives: Rina Banerjee

August 2013–May 2014 Sackler

Born in India and based in New York City, artist Rina Banerjee (b. 1963) draws on her background as a scientist and experience as an immigrant. Her richly textured works complicate the role of objects as representations of cultures and invite viewers to share her fascination in materials. By juxtaposing organic and plastic objects—such as combining ornate textiles and animal forms with tourist souvenirs—she concocts fairytale worlds that are both enticing and subtly menacing.

Detail, *I'll get you my pretty*

By Rina Banerjee

Multimedia installation

Courtesy the artist and Haunch of Venison, London

Photo by Peter Mallet

Yoga: The Art of Transformation

October 19, 2013–January 26, 2014 Sackler

Through masterpieces of Indian sculpture and painting, *Yoga: The Art of Transformation* explores yoga's goals; its Hindu as well as Buddhist, Jain, and Sufi manifestations; its means of transforming body and consciousness; and its profound philosophical foundations. The first exhibition to present this leitmotif of Indian visual culture, it also examines the roles that yogis and yoginis played in Indian society over two thousand years.

Yoga includes more than 120 works dating from the third to the early twentieth century. Temple sculptures, devotional icons, illustrated manuscripts, and court paintings—as well as colonial and early modern photographs, books, and films—illuminate yoga's central tenets and its obscured histories.

The exhibition borrows from twenty-five museums and private collections in India, Europe, and the United States. Highlights include an installation that reunites for the first time three monumental stone yogini goddesses from a tenth-century Chola temple; ten folios from the first illustrated compilation of *asanas* (yogic postures), made for a Mughal emperor in 1602, which have never before been exhibited together; and Thomas Edison's *Hindoo Fakir* (1906), the first movie ever produced about India.

Chakras of the Subtle Body

Folio 4 from the *Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati*
Jodhpur, 1824
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
122 x 46 cm
Mehrangarh Museum Trust
RJS 2376



CONTINUING FEATURED EXHIBITIONS

The Peacock Room Comes to America

Through spring 2016

Ancient Chinese Jades and Bronzes

Continues indefinitely

Sculpture of South Asia and the Himalayas

Continues indefinitely

Arts of the Indian Subcontinent and the Himalayas

Continues indefinitely

Arts of the Islamic World

Continues indefinitely

Arts of China

Continues indefinitely

Freer & Whistler: Points of Contact

Continues indefinitely

The Religious Art of Japan

Continues indefinitely

Chinese Ceramics: 10th–13th Century

Continues indefinitely

Silk Road Luxuries from China

Continues indefinitely

Reinventing the Wheel: Japanese Ceramics 1930–2000

Continues indefinitely

Cranes and Clouds: The Korean Art of Ceramic Inlay

Continues indefinitely

Xu Bing: Monkeys Grasping for the Moon

Continues indefinitely

Office of Public Affairs and Marketing

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